The BROKEN COIN by EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

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FIRST INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER I.

The Cryptic Coin.

Kitty Gray, crack reporter on the Evening Star, pulled out of her typewriter the last sheet of paper and piled it on the little heap of finished copy which lay at her right. Then she closed her desk, stepped to the wardrobe and took her coat and hat.

Taking her little collection of copy paper from the desk, with the privilege of long tenure in office she walked to the desk of the city editor, who, although himself a married man, had all this time without success tried to look at the work before him and not at the trim figure of Kitty Gray making ready for her luncheon journey.

"When will you deign to return?" asked he with a certain lapse in journalistic dignity.

"When I have a better story than this guff—in the vernacular."

Kitty's favorite lunching place was in one of the great department stores, where women were made welcome and comfortable, and she bent thither her steps; but midway in her journey she paused, as often she did, to gaze into the window of the little antique shop which occupied space in one of the unimportant side streets.

Kitty Gray's eyes were arrested by something that she saw—an object which she did not recall ever before to have noted in the window. It lay close to the glass, just tilted back so that it might be the better seen. It apparently was an old coin or part of one, curiously done in some dark metal, probably silver badly oxidized

As Kitty bent down to examine it more closely, she saw that the coin bore an inscription, or what appeared to be such—an inscription broken across by the fracture which had divided the coin itself.

Her curiosity excited, Kitty Gray stepped into the little shop, whose proprietor she knew very well.

"Good morning, Mr. Mainz," she said with the customary newspaper inversion of the order of the day, "how's business? Any new fans, idols, coins—?"

"Coins? Vot? Sure, I got somet'ing new dot is olt. I choost t'ink of him. He iss only a part of himselluf. Should I show him to you?"

"Oh, maybe I saw it in the window," said Kitty, simling. "You mean the broken coin?"

"Sure. Vait till I got him."

She took up the coin now from the case, and some strange sort of thrill came over her as she did so, she could not tell why. What was its message, halting, broken, incomplete? Did it hold a story? What was the story?

"It's odd, isn't it?" said she, and laid it down again carelessly—with a carelessness well feigned, for Kitty Gray had bought antiques before now, and knew well enough when to suppress interest.

"Odt? I should say it vas odt," rejoined the old dealer. Kitty had picked up an inlaid mother of pearl fan and was studiously examining that now.

"How much?" asked she, holding up the fan.

"For the broken coin?"

"No, the fan."

"I vant twelf tollar for him."

"For the coin?"

"No, for the fan. For the coin—vat you gif me?"

"Why, what earthly use would I have for a broken piece of metal like that, Mr. Mainz?"

"Gif me for the fan eleven dollar, und I make you a present of the broken coin anyway."

Kitty Gray's heart gave a sudden little jump. She would have given twice eleven dollars for the coin itself, but she made a good pretense.

"Eleven dollars is a good deal of money," said she. "I would have to go without lunch for quite a while."

"You are a goot sport, Miss Cray," said the old dealer. "I dank you very mooch. I should wrap them up?"

"The fan—yes. Let me see the coin again." She pushed across the counter almost the last of the tightly folded bills in her purse.

"Read the inscription for me, and I knock off two tollars from the fan!" said Mainz. "Vot is it? It is not Cherman, it is not Franzoesisch, it is not English. I am all those. But I could not read him."

Kitty held before her the curious object, a slight frown puckering her brows.

"Well, you see," said she, "it is broken right across on the right hand side—almost a third of the writing is gone. It says something about looking for something under the floor, under the pavement of some place of torture or torment."

"Und vot next?"

"'Thesaur'—that word's broken across, but it must mean 'thesaurus'—that means 'a collection'—a 'collection of value,' don't you know?

"The next line is one word; it's all there—'Regis,'" she went on. "That's plain. 'Rex'—'regis'—it means 'king's' or 'of the king.' 'The king's treasures'—what?

"I'm down to the last words now. It is curious—a proper name. It is only the Latin name of the kingdom of Gretzhoffen! That's a little bankrupt kingdom over in southern Europe, near the Mediterranean. I know about it—I did a story about it once, the time the kingdom was trying to float a loan in this country. I had to read up a whole lot."

"I bet you could did it, Miss Cray," said Mainz, admiringly. "Vell, gootby. Come again und tell me vot you find out, like a goot girl."

"Sure," said Kitty, and turned to leave, her coin clutched tightly in her hand. So intent was she on her purchase that she did not notice she had dropped the package containing the shell-ribbed fan. Vaguely missing something as she emerged into the open air, she turned back, and almost ran into a man who had passed her as she came out. He was a foreign-looking individual, dark of hair and eyes and skin, strongly built, a figure such as one would note. He bowed now courteously enough as he handed her the package she had let fall. Kitty thanked him and hurried on her way. This stranger entered the shop and spoke in some foreign tongue to the old dealer, who shook his head.

"No," said he, answering in English. "I choost sold it—to dot young lady who vent out.

"Who is she? I know her very well. She is on der papers. Better look out or she put you in der paper sure. Miss Kitty Gray vos an oldt frent of mine. She read like a book vot vos on the coin. Vy didn't you telephone—maybe she sell it back to you—I don't know. She wouldn't sold it back to me, I know dot. Vot! you are going?"

CHAPTER II.

The Big Assignment.

Kitty Gray did not go to her usual place for luncheon that day. Instead she hurried into a nearby delicatessen shop and bought a sandwich, which she put in her handbag. After this she hurried on back to the office. Arrived there, without ceremony she went again to the desk of the city editor, and silently laid down before him her empty purse, her antique fan, her sandwich and her broken coin.

Cutler looked up with professional calm.

"Yes, Miss Gray? Why all this orderly array of fresh and interesting objects?"

"That is my story," said she.

"What makes you think so? Are you seeing things, Miss Gray?"

"Look here."

Kitty picked up the coin and showed it to him.

"See, it is broken quite across—more than a third of it gone. The inscription is Latin. It is not so much what is on the coin—it is what is off of it. Perhaps it commemorates something."

"Commemorates what, Miss Gray?"

"Precisely—what? That's the story!"

"By Jove!" Cutler was studying at the inscription. "'Sub' means 'under'—what does it say?—under the bamboo tree?'"

"No, 'under the sidewalk' or the 'flagstone,' or 'floor.'"

"'Underneath the flagstone' or 'pavement' or 'floor'—'in the angle' or 'corner'—whatever that may be—'chamber of torture'—'room of torments'—whatever it is—'there will be found treasures'—'of the king'—'of —'"

"—'Of Gretzhoffen!'" concluded Kitty Gray. "You have not forgotten all your Latin, have you, Mr. Cutler? There is a story for you—if we can only dig it out. There'd be an assignment, wouldn't there? I'd rather do that than society in the summertime."

Billy Cutler, time-tried news man, grown thin and grim and gray in the business, sat for just one moment in thought. "Wait a minute, please," said he at length, and rose to leave the room.

Kitty did wait anxiously enough, for what reason she could not tell. She sat at her own desk, the mysterious broken coin tight clutched in her hand. It seemed an hour before she saw the slender form of the city editor returning from the door which led to the office of the manager and publisher of the Evening Star. He looked at her thoughtfully as he approached.

He held out a check.

"Three thousand dollars!" Kitty Gray's eyes grew larger.

"Expense money. Three months' vacation. Full powers as missionary plenipotentiary of the Evening Star to Gretzhoffen, ambassadress to any old place you happen to think of, Miss Gray. I never knew the old man to go off his head before, but he has this time."

* * * * * * *

Tugging at her heart the swift feeling that she was leaving her usual modest and safe line of life to adventure upon something perhaps fateful—perhaps indeed fatal—Kitty Gray, sober-faced, turned from the door of the Evening Star and walked slowly toward the corner where customarily she took her car for home.

She entered her apartment, cast one glance about the first little room, and then paused.

The rug in the hall was turned over at one corner—was it by accident? The pictures all hung on the walls, yet several were askew, and—the little wall-safe back of one of the pictures—which had held some small objects of little value, an old daguerreotype or two, some silver spoons, a few gold pieces which she had cherished—had been broken open. Its contents now lay upon the floor. Amazed, Kitty stooped and picked them up, one by one. Nothing was missing—even the gold coins were there. Nothing had been harmed. But who had done this, and why?

CHAPTER II.

En Voyage.

The great liner Anne of Austria lay in her slip at the dock, her giant pulses just throbbing now and then. Everywhere men and women were hurrying to and fro in the customary orderly confusion of the last few moments before the departure of an ocean steamer.

Calmly Kitty Gray passed on her way to the boat's office and asked for her mail and her keys.

As she turned, she almost stumbled against a man who had just hurried aboard—a dark man, thickset, foreign in appearance. She had the strange conviction that she had seen him before.

Then she turned to settle herself down in her quarters. So far as she knew, she had not an acquaintance on the boat.

Now, oddly enough, she recalled the face of the stranger, the dark-visaged foreigner whom she had met at the ship's office. Surely it must have been the same man who had handed her her package when she dropped it in the little antique shop! Why should he be on board this boat? Why should he recognize her, remember her—for he had! Trust a woman to know that—he had—he did. Yes, he had known her. Again a cold feeling of apprehension clutched at Kitty Gray's stout little heart.

She rose and tried to fling off her depression by means of a visit to the dining saloon. But for some reason she felt she would be more comfortable—or safe—in her own room. Here she lay down upon the single berth, which was directly beneath the porthole.

She woke—she knew not when nor why—woke with her eyes staring, passing in her instant from sleep to waking.

A face was looking in upon her! A man had been looking at her, or trying to look at her, as she lay asleep.

Kitty Gray's instinct spoke to her some message—she could not tell what. Swiftly she caught the chamois bag from her bosom, and, emptying its main treasures into her hand, placed them in that other treasure house of woman—her stocking. Again feeling the drowsiness invoked by the fresh salt air, at length she lay down once more upon the little couch and resigned herself more comfortably to slumber.

But again she woke—this time it was with a scream of terror. She had felt the touch of a hand. Something had tugged at her neck.

She raised her hand. The chamois bag was gone—it was the jerk of the broken silk cord that had

"I Choost Sold It to Dot Young Lady Who Went Out."

awakened her! And there was the hand that had done it, a strong, dark hand, full-veined, hairy. It still clutched the bag—it still was visible at the porthole. A ribbon end had entangled itself for just an instant in the porthole fastening—an instant long enough for Kitty to see what had been the hand that had committed this robbery.

But who was the robber himself? Quick as thought Kitty sprang to the door, ran down the deck, out the next deck door. The band was giving its first saloon concert, and the decks were sparsely tenanted, it seemed. Far off towards the bow a man was passing—what man she could not say. He seemed neither to hurry nor to linger. She could not make out who it was, dared not hang upon him her own suspicion.

She turned to the captain now and made report of what had happened not once but twice; but even as she went she smiled grimly to herself. The

"It's Odd, Isn't It?" She Said.

chamois bag was worthless—it had held only a kerchief, a bit of powder puff, perhaps a little silver—nothing more. Her real treasures—she knew where they were now.

The captain was outraged at what he learned when at length she gained admittance to his cabin. With marine precision, he acted at once. From that time on all through the voyage, a boat detective stood at each end of the passageway which led to Kitty's stateroom.

No trace of any other robbery could be found, nor any clue by which the intruder could be identified.

CHAPTER IV.

The Consul's Story.

The business of any true American consul is to have known the father, or at least some relation, of any caller who comes from his own nation. Consul Jethro Thompson of Ohio, cast away in the melancholy enterprise of representing the dignity of this republic in this small and none-too-well-known principality of Gretzhoffen, was glad—really glad—to see Miss Kitty Gray. And he knew—really knew—her father, or had done so at the time when he was still living.

"It's a grand little place, isn't it—Gretzhoffen?" said Kitty smiling. "I've read about it—and written about it—before now. But this isn't a vacation, really. I am on a big assignment, Mr. Consul. I may want your help—the only trouble is, I don't know what I do want to do—I am after a story, and I don't know where it is or what it is!"

The gaunt, kindly old man smiled at her. "Well, my dear, rest assured that I will do all I can for you. And, between us, we ought to start something, maybe; if it's stories you're after, you've come to the place where they grow, that's sure enough. Why, Miss Kitty, the story of the king of Gretzhoffen alone would fill a book."

"What do you know of Gretzhoffen, anyhow?" he asked suddenly. "You said you had written about it. I suppose—"

"Well, you see," replied Kitty, "when the big news story about the proposed Gretzhoffen loan—its hawking about the street and its rejection—when that came out I was put on the assignment of looking into Gretzhoffen in general. I remember that the old king's name was Michael, wasn't it?"

"The one that died? Yes, Michael the First. He was a good sort. His death was the unluckiest thing that ever happened for this poor little people. He was a good man, King Michael, and a strong one and a just. So much cannot be said, I am thinking, of the new incumbent of the throne, Michael the Second.

"You see, this Michael the Second is only a king in name, when it comes to facts. He is only a little lieutenant. He has been put on the job by a bigger and stronger man—Count Frederick is the real power behind the throne in Gretzhoffen—a strong and handsome man—be sure you don't fall in love with him. What Count Frederick plans no one knows. Perhaps he has his own eye on the throne—we can't tell what may happen. I say it is a tense sort of place, Gretzhoffen. But Gretzhoffen is broke. Michael, the king, is broke. Count Frederick, the Warwick of Gretzhoffen, also is broke. That is why they tried to make a loan in our own country.

"But they didn't seem to have the collateral—no unused revenues—nothing which had not been used or spent or wasted.

"When Michael the First died, his treasury disappeared. He was rich, the old king was—rich in the name of Gretzhoffen. But the crown jewels, the imperial securities, the crown treasures of all sorts, the imperial mintage of every description—they disappeared. There was rumor that the old king hid his treasures somewhere, but that he left some sort of a mysterious record by which they might be traced. No one knows just what was left for that record. It is known, however, or supposed, at least, that it was put into the possession of an old servant—one of the few men the old king trusted. But this man finally gave up some part of what he knew—part of the proof, whatever it was—to the new king, when he himself was about to die.

"Between them, Count Frederick and Michael the Second bankrupted this kingdom, or at least Michael did. It was their oyster, and they opened it and scraped the shell.

"Now, in case the Count Frederick, the big plunger, or his man Grahame, or the little King Michael the Second, should ever get hold of the remaining clue to the whereabouts of old King Michael's treasury—pouf!—you know what would happen then. There would, Miss Kitty, to quote a certain American ballad, 'be a hot time in the old town' in that case."

"It's a story!" sighed Kitty Gray, drawing a long breath. But a troubled light came to her eyes at the same time. "How will a fellow dig it out?" she asked whimsically.

CHAPTER V.

The Encounter.

Meanwhile, during the interview Kitty Gray had with the American consul, a scene of other import was enacting elsewhere in the Gretzhoffen capital. In the interior of a white marble fronted palace, perhaps a mile or so distant from the humble quarters of the American consulate, a tall, dark, imperious man was pacing up and down restlessly, his eyes now and again turned upon the door of the great apartment, as though he expected someone to enter. At length the door did open. A soft-footed servant appeared.

"Monsieur Roleau, excellency," he announced.

"What, Roleau!" exclaimed the tall man impetuously, as the visitor entered. "What has kept you? The ship docked hours ago. And have you got it? Come, come, man!"

The individual addressed as Roleau bowed deeply. "Excellency," he said, "I came as soon as I could be sure I would not be watched."

He was a man of dark complexion, of strong and sturdy build, of broad shoulders and deep chest—a man half a giant, one would have said—but his eyes dropped as they met the stern gaze of him he addressed, as though he might have been his master.

"You found it—you succeeded, then—tell me!"

"Excellency—sire—yes."

The newcomer extended a hand which trembled slightly. "I swear it was in this bag"—he was offering a little chamois bag tied with a ribbon at the top—a bag which apparently had been once suspended by the broken silk cord attached to it.

"You say it was in this bag—then why not now?"

The tall man caught the little receptacle from the other's hands—ripped it wide—shook out the contents. There fell into his hand upon the table near which he stood, only a few trinkets of a woman's toilet—a little dainty handkerchief—a coin, yes, a coin.

The tall man held this up in his hand, his face distorted with rage.

"What! a half-dollar of their cursed money! Curse you!" He half shrieked, and as he did so flung the piece full in the other's face, with such violence that the skin broke under its impact.

"The coin!" went on the enraged speaker—"what do you mean? Do you mock me, Frederick, your real monarch? You shall die for this. You have failed—you have not found it—you have lost it!"

His own eyes half starting from his head in his anger, he strode forward and caught the throat of Roleau in his two mighty hands, shaking him as he would have shaken a child.

"Go!" he said, and flung him toward the door.

It was as Kitty Gray, after leaving the American consulate, was speeding toward her hotel in her hired vehicle that she caught sight of a man staggering from the side entrance of a great mansion house of white marble front. He seemed to have escaped from some calamity—from an attempted robbery or murder. Without pausing to ponder upon propriety, she halted her vehicle and sprang out, hastening over to the sufferer, who stood at the edge of the curb.

"What is wrong?" said she. "You are in trouble—you are hurt! Shall I take you home—to some hospital—to the hotel? Come in, you are welcome."

The man looked at her mutely, hesitating.

"Come, I will carry you where you like." She had him by the arm now, and unsightly as he seemed, hurried him into the door of her own vehicle and followed him.

"The Ritz, driver," she directed. And so, in the role of Samaritan, Kitty Gray made her second arrival that day at the stately hotel which she had selected as her own abode.

All through the ride the man at her side remained silent, suffering acutely. He turned his face away. Again there came to Kitty Gray the strange feeling that she felt something which she ought to recognize, she could not tell what. In truth, sympathy had the better of curiosity for the time. She did not examine her strange companion closely, only speaking to him an occasional word of sympathy and assurance. Suddenly remembering that she did not know who he was, and remembering also that her own conduct might be held as singular, she turned her companion over to the head porter of the hotel and hurried away to her own room.

Apparently the disfigured stranger remained at the hotel that night, for when, at eleven of the following morning, Kitty Gray emerged, properly arrayed for a morning ride, she saw the stranger in the hotel lobby, his face swathed in bandages. He seemed to be waiting for her approach, spoke to her some words in a tongue which she did not understand—then changed to French—and then to English.

"If mademoiselle would permit me," he said, "I might be of use, even as I am. I know the city. Might I act as courier for the time? I would show my gratitude, if mademoiselle regards it as proper for me thus to do so."

Kitty Gray, actuated by no definite purpose, but governed by the impulse which she trusted in her trade, turned suddenly toward the curb where stood her hired motor car, and motioned to the man to enter.

They passed on down the wide avenue of the capital, a strange couple enough. Kitty looked curiously about her, studiously examining everything she saw. Yes, the old city was beautiful, with its long lines of green trees, its stately edifices built by hands long stilled in death. Soon she began to find the need of a guide, and unobtrusively the muffled figure at her side quietly suggested the information he thought might be of service. He pointed out some of the other large hotels—mansion houses of this or that court official, the hall of justice, the city hall, the great cathedrals, the royal palace, the palace of the Count Frederick.

"Yes," exclaimed Kitty Gray, "it was here that I found you yesterday. The hotel of the Count Frederick. I know, yes, but why—how did you—"

Her companion suddenly raised a hand, touched her arm gently, requesting silence.

A great car, splendidly equipped and driven at rushing speed, came out of the very side street on which Kitty Gray had found her companion on the previous day. In the car, his gloved hand resting on his stick, sat a tall man, erect, strikingly handsome in his own way, imperious of air and bold of gaze.

Kitty Gray did not notice that her companion had shrunk back low into the seat. Her own eyes met those of the occupant of the advancing car.

Kitty Gray was young and more than a little handsome. She had taken pains to turn herself out well as she might in view of the possible surroundings she might meet on her

"You Shall Die for This."

strange quest. To the bold eyes of the tall stranger she must have seemed fair enough to look upon, for suddenly, as he passed, he stared at her directly, bowed, raised his hat—yes, even smiled.

"Who was that man?" demanded Kitty Gray fiercely of her companion. "He doesn't know me. And yet how like he looked to pictures I have seen. There was a man—an international spy, they said in our country—some strange foreigner—at the time of the Gretzhoffen loan fiasco. Yes, the two faces are strangely alike. Who is he?"

"Of the other I know nothing," rejoined her companion; "but this—he is the Count Frederick."

"Count Frederick—the pretender!"

"Hush, mademoiselle, for God's sake hush! We do not dare—you must not dare."

"Follow!" said Kitty Gray sharply. "Now tell me more."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Broken Coin

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by Grace Cunard

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

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SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

SECOND INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER VI.

Count Frederick.

Kitty Gray turned suddenly to the man seated beside her in the motor, bending upon him a steady gaze.

"Who are you?" asked she. "Why did you follow me?"

The swathed figure suddenly straightened. "Whatever I am—whatever you may think me, do not believe me incapable of gratitude to yourself."

"What is your name?"

"They call me Roleau, mademoiselle."

Kitty Gray turned yet more closely to him, gazed straight into his eyes.

"Then why not enlist with me? Surely we have a common cause. We have a common enemy. Would it be wrong did you and I league against him?"

"You ask me, then—"

"To be my friend, my ally."

"Surely I owe him no allegiance further!" exclaimed Roleau bitterly. "He struck me like a dog."

"Yet you and I must see him again—and soon."

"What! Would you trust yourself once more in his presence? You are an American girl—you are innocent, you are ignorant. I warn you."

"None the less, if I am to go forward with the business which brought me here to Gretzhoffen, surely I must once more meet the Count Frederick.

The man at her side hesitated no more than an instant. "Very well," said he calmly. "As for me, my life has been forfeit many a time before now. What matter? I will go with you as you say. Indeed, I fancy I know why you ask me to go—they know me at the palace—they will admit us both."

It was as Roleau had said. When finally the two drew up to the court driveway in front of the count's palace, they were admitted without question. Roleau closed the door behind him and put a finger to his lips for silence.

"They will listen," he whispered. "Be careful. This is the room where Count Frederick receives his—friends."

Curiously, silently, Kitty sat or at times walked about the room, taking stock of the surroundings. Count Frederick entered.

"Mademoiselle! I am charmed! So you remember me?"

"You may say as much indeed," rejoined Kitty Gray calmly. "I saw you in the carriage this morning."

He turned now to Roleau, with no change in his countenance to indicate any recollection of the nature of their last meeting. "You may retire to the next room," said he, dismissing him with a wave of the hand.

"Do not in the least misunderstand me, Monsieur le Comte," said she lightly. "My business is very simple. I have a proposition to make to you—a business proposition."

"But I am not a business man," mocked the smiling antagonist who faced her. He came yet a half step closer.

"Are you so sure?" exclaimed she suddenly. "Is there no business in which also I am definitely concerned? Then why did you send a messenger to follow me in my own country, to ransack my apartments there, to violate my privacy even on the steamer?"

"My man served me but ill—if I may admit part of what you say mademoiselle."

"That is why I am here—and in his company! Yes, I know your messenger as I know you. Come, let us reason together over this, Monsieur le Comte. Shall it be business or war between us?"

The sheer audacity of this speech for one moment daunted Count Frederick. The next he broke into a roar of laughter and flung himself into a chair. "Admirable!" said he.

She started away from him, moving toward the door. "I came, Monsieur le Comte," said she boldly, "to ask you what price for the half coin which you seek to hold. Suppose, for instance, that Gretzhoffen loan were executed for you finally in New York—would that influence you at all? Come now, let us reason."

"I am beyond reason; I care little for the sordid side. I value not so much money as what money brings. It could bring me no more than what fortune has brought me at no cost, this morning—this very hour."

"Roleau!" cried Kitty suddenly. "A moi! Au secours! Vite!"

"You waste breath," laughed Count Frederick. "He cannot come."

Kitty made one swift dart toward the door. She was too late. The relentless face of her opponent smiled at her, his strong fingers turned the key in the lock, removed it, thrust it into his pocket.

"Mademoiselle," he said calmly, "you say you came on business. Very well, let us talk business. We know something of the history of a certain broken coin. Very good. You have half of it. We will say I have the other. Give me your half the coin, and I will let you go. Refuse, and I'll never let you go."

"I will do nothing under compulsion from you or any other man," said Kitty Gray stoutly. "I offer you a fair price for your half of the coin."

"You will not give it to me?"

"No! No!"

A loud pounding on the door interrupted them at this moment. "It is Roleau," smiled the count. "I will have him whipped."

The face of Kitty Gray had grown like marble. Suddenly, with one swift movement, she dashed her clenched hand with all her force into the face which bent toward her. A livid mark arose under the swift compact. The tall man staggered back. The next instant Kitty felt her wrist caught in an iron grasp. Struggling, she was forced backward. She felt another hand grasp her wrist.

The man Grahame, the count's valet, had appeared mysteriously from the alcove adjoining.

"Give me the coin!" insisted Count Frederick still. "Tell me where I may have it—or by the Lord! you will rest a long time to think this matter over."

"Excellency!" ejaculated the man Grahame suddenly. "On guard! He is breaking in the door. Quick, excellency!"

And even as Roleau, by a mighty heave burst in the door, Grahame and his master hurried Kitty to the rear door of the alcove. It made out upon a dimly lighted hall.

Roleau heard them pass, followed swiftly as he could. But it was empty. The purr of a motor getting under way reached his ears.

"So, then—we failed," said Roleau bitterly.

CHAPTER VII.

In the Desert.

Convinced against her will, as she hurried along in the grasp of the two powerful men, that compliance would serve her purpose better than resistance, Kitty Gray took her place on the seat of the motor car.

"More and more I admire you," said the man at her side, as the motor swung into its speed. "What a woman you are! If you would but give me time—"

"You shall have all the time you ask, Monsieur le Comte!"

"Still, I ponder as to your motive in all this. It cannot be money."

"Indeed it is money—in part."

"How much, mademoiselle?"

"A year's salary—I have got much at stake, on my word. Twelve hundred dollars, Monsier le Comte. It is a fortune for me."

Count Frederick flung himself back upon the cushions and laughed long and loud. "Twelve hundred dollars!" said he. "Twelve hundred dollars in a whole year, in an entire year? My dear, give me the half coin you have upon you, and I promise you shall have twelve thousand dollars to spend as you like each and every day of your life, as long as you live. Come now, is it a trade? You said you came to talk business."

For the first time now Kitty looked about her, scarce having realized how long their journey had been. So great had been their speed that by this time they had cleared the city walls of Gretzhoffen and passed the tilled farmlands of the villages. It was what was known locally as the desert—a neutral ground, not tilled and incapable of successful tillage, which lay between the two kingdoms of Gretzhoffen on the east and Grahoffen on the west.

Whether it was the heat of the sun which had expanded the air in the motor tires, or whether there was some sharp stone under the wheel, there was no time to determine; yet suddenly, with the usual riflelike report, there was an explosion of the tire. The car was practically helpless.

Kitty looked about her vaguely, fearfully, but as she bent from the open window she heard in the distance the chug of another motor, driven rapidly, thrown wide open and coming forward at great speed. "Quick! Grahame," the count demanded. "This is your work. She has it on her person. You must—yes, you must take it at once."

As he laid hand upon her, all the hot indignation of Kitty's soul flamed up. She battled as best she might. She defeated the man in his purpose of snatching at the string which he saw suspended about her neck. His suspicions were well founded, for once more Kitty had concealed her portion of the coin in a little bag which she carried thus. Baffled, and knowing that he had small time to finish his work, Grahame at length raised a dastardly hand and struck the girl in the face. She fell, stunned, at his feet.

"You ruffian, what have you done!" exclaimed his master, as with a thin smile Grahame held up the chamois bag.

But Count Frederick ripped it open, took from it what he saw, and thrust it into his pocket. Even as this happened, the pursuing car was closing in upon them. It was Roleau who sprang from the seat and hastened forward, revolver in hand. As he did so a weapon cracked from the car of Count Frederick, and Roleau, stumbling, fell forward and lay still.

"Come Grahame—quick." An instant later they had taken possession of the motor impressed by Roleau.

How long she remained senseless, she herself scarcely knew, but when Kitty stirred, raised her head, she saw lying close beside her the figure of the man who had sought to befriend her.

Kitty suddenly raised her hand to her neck. The cord was gone. The packet was missing.

When after a time she ceased in a useless effort to lug the heavy body of Roleau into the shelter of the car, she turned to gaze about her. She paused, her gaze arrested. Yes, a little caravan, apparently from some far off land, and journeying hither frankly enough across the neutral ground between these two little kingdoms.

The apparent leader of this little caravan was a reticent, dark-bearded man. He advanced now quietly toward the young woman.

"The lady is in distress? There has been trouble here—robbers, bandits—your man has been killed, perhaps. Yes, there are many such in this land, between the two kingdoms. There is no law here, mademoiselle. I cross as you see, with my own men armed. I am, if you please, a merchant of Grahoffen. Sometimes I do a little merchandising between the two kingdoms."

He pointed to the coat of arms on the door of the disabled car. "The Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen has been here."

"Aye, the Count Frederick! It was he who left us here."

He made a gesture now to his attendants, and as some of them lifted the limp form of Roleau, he himself assisted Kitty to mound. A few moments later and the strange procession was again on its way.

"Mademoiselle," said the leader at length, as he drew up alongside, "I must continue on into my own country. We are near the edge of it here. At the little stream which lies just beyond there is a house of a peasant—it is but a hovel and no fit place for you, that is true. But even so, that is better either for you or for your man."

They advanced now a little distance farther, until within full sight of the peasant's little hut, Radoz made signs

Kitty Felt Her Wrist Caught in an Iron Grasp.

that his charges should be assisted in dismounting.

The cowlike peasant woman proved not inept in ministrations—perhaps she had seen such hurts as these before in her life here on the border. She made Roleau comfortable.

CHAPTER VIII.

Count Sachio of Grahoffen.

At sunrise of the following morning Kitty awoke as suddenly as she had fallen asleep the night before.

After her frugal breakfast with the old peasant folk—with whom she could hold no conversation whatever—she set out for the bedside of the faithful attendant who had been injured in her cause.

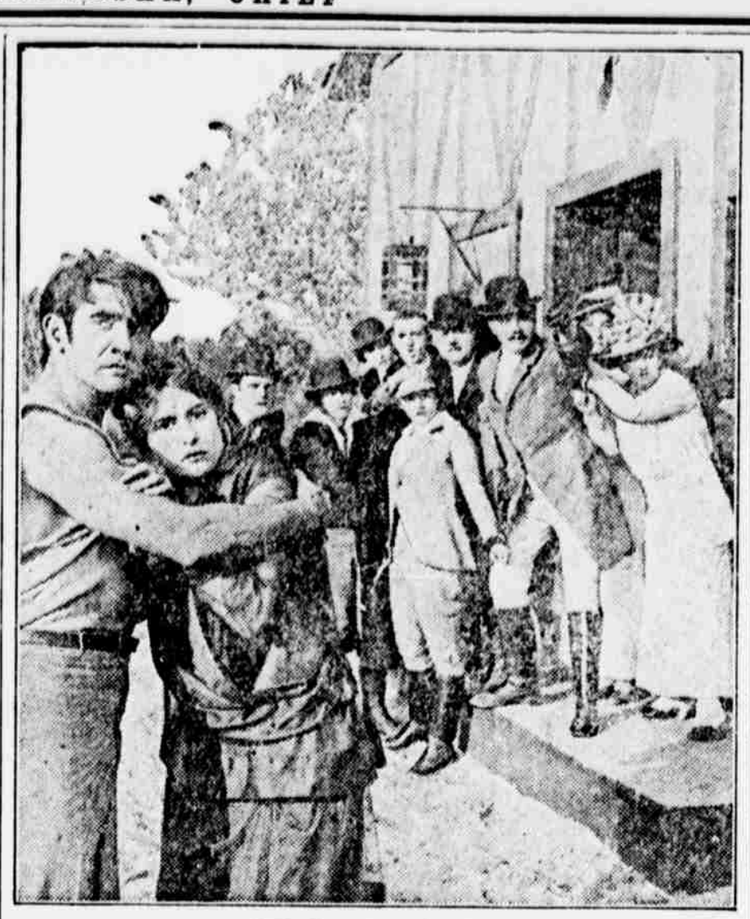
"Roleau, good morning," she said. "How goes it, then?"

"Excellently! I am quite well. I find my wound not to be serious. I can travel."

"Better rest for yet a time," said Kitty. "It will be the best medicine for you. As for myself, I purpose now to go out and spy out the land."

She left him, making some excuse to her peasant hosts, passed out from the little cottage. She walked on steadily, not ill content after all, until just as she arrived at the edge of the forest she noticed advancing from its depths a little party of horsemen, who were riding swiftly toward her on the trail.

They came on at a gallop, foreign-looking men, richly clad, dark of visage, equipped as though for the



"This Lady Is In My Care."

hunt. The apparent leader of the party, a stalwart, sturdy man, dark of hair and richly clad—rode slightly in advance of the others.

Catching sight of a young woman—and a very pretty one—standing thus alone on the forest road, this gentleman pulled up suddenly. "Bonjour, monsieur," said Kitty, with her usual recourse to the French language.

"Eh bien, c'est que vous parlez Francais?" And at once he himself broke into voluble French, much to Kitty's delight.

"I am an American," she went on to say.

"I ask pardon, mademoiselle," rejoined the dark man—whose bold eyes, after what seemed to Kitty to be the fashion of the country, now were carefully estimating her, line by line—"I beg your pardon, but mademoiselle is alone? Why?"

"My companion is ill yonder at the peasant's house. There was an accident yesterday with our motor—he is not yet able to travel."

"I am riding but now to my own hunting lodge, a few miles yonder at the edge of the forest; why not come with me so that we might speak over this matter? I am entertaining friends there—a little house party—there are other ladies. You will be made welcome. If you can ride—"

"Oh, yes," said Kitty. "I can manage."

It was not long before they arrived at the hunting lodge.

Count Sachio introduced his guests with a few words in his own language. They stared politely, smiled discreetly, but made Kitty welcome.

"Now, be off with you all!" exclaimed Count Sachio. "To the woodland paths, since the morning is so fresh."

"Mademoiselle, you will have refreshments?" he asked, as, laughing gayly, the others dispersed.

"Nothing more for me than a cup of tea," said Kitty gravely. "Lest you think me rude—perhaps it may be well for me to excuse myself. Is there any way in which I may get back to the cottage where I left my man?"

"Not so fast, not so fast as all that, ma cherie! You have not tested out my humble place as well as I would ask. Come, what you think of it?

Not his words so much as his manner sent swift alarm into Kitty Gray's heart. Swiftly she arose and made back as he, warmed somewhat by his wine, now advanced toward her, smiling. Her gesture angered him and he stepped forward, but more swiftly. At once Kitty gave voice to a loud cry of terror—the appeal for help—a woman's first weapon of defense. For, even as she did so, she heard the sound of hoofs on the trail beyond the edge of the forest.

"Roleau!" She cried aloud, "A moi!"

Kitty guessed, rather than knew, that Roleau's uneasiness on her account had led him to pursue her. Such, indeed, was the case.

"Who are you, man?" demanded Count Sachio, imperiously. "I am Sachio of Grahoffen, man—one who need not declare himself to you. Your life shall pay for this!"

"Good! Why not now, my friend?" retorted Roleau calmly. "I have seen men of many sorts before now, but none that I feared. This lady is in my care. She will ride with me, and we will ride better horses than that on which I came."

Even as he spoke he passed rapidly among the spirited mounts of the little party lately arrived. Two he selected for himself and Kitty. With the others he was busy with a few strokes of the short knife he wore. He grinned as he came out from among the horses.

"So, Monsieur Sachio of Grahoffen," said he, "you will ride with short girths if you follow us." In truth he had cut a piece out of the girth of each one of the unused horses.

An instant later he and Kitty were mounted and speeding away.

CHAPTER IX.

King Michael II.

When Count Frederick and his accomplice Grahame left their two victims lying helpless in the sandy plain, they themselves made all speed possible back to the capital. In spite of his regret at violence to a woman, exultation sat on the dark features of Count Frederick.

"Now, Grahame," he exclaimed, "at last we have it."

"Excellency," rejoined the other, "you have but half the coin. I told you where the two pieces were—where each was. One you have at last, and after some trouble. But the other is still in the possession of Michael the king. He may not yield it easily."

"With ease or difficulty, he shall give it up," growled Count Frederick. "We will take it from him if need be."

And straightway to the Royal palace of Gretzhoffen they fared on, fast as might be. There was no difficulty in securing admission, for Count Frederick was well known at the palace, almost as the king himself.

King Michael II looked with a certain disapproval upon Count Frederick's dusty clothes.

"I ask your majesty's pardon, but I have had no time to arrange myself in proper courtesy. My errand is urgent. But I fancy you cannot guess it?"

"Not in the least. It could not be that you wish to ask me again what you asked me the last time you came here—about the broken coin!"

"Yes, it was precisely that."

"Why, then?"

"Your majesty has promised me some little thing in reward for a certain service which I was able to render not long ago. It was rude of me to remind of that—but suddenly there came up a need for some little trinket—some jewel—some oddity. Your majesty, I wish it for a lady, and my jeweler told me he could make of this broken coin—"

"There is a woman in it?" The puffy eyes of the king showed interest now.

"To be sure—there is always a woman."

"Why not then a pearl, a sapphire, a diamond perhaps? Take as you like." He waved an indifferent, pudgy hand toward a cabinet. "Michael the Second keeps all his promises."

"But why not the coin, your majesty?"

"You persist? So do I. I suggest that for a lady—and you say there is a lady—you make some gift more fitting. I have explained to you that the coin is not presently at hand. But as I said, help yourself to something that is better."

Count Frederick was a man of wit quick enough to see that here was no time to force an argument. Defeated once more, he even accepted his defeat. He stepped now to the little drawer which the king pulled open for him, and selected a very modest little ring, which carelessly he dropped into his own pocket.

CHAPTER X.

Greek Meets Greek.

Arrived at his own home, Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen found a little pile of unopened letters waiting for him, and picked up one bearing the crest of Count Sachio of Grahoffen, a man he had known for many years and with whom, if truth be told, he had had certain plans which neither would have cared to have come into public knowledge. He tore open the envelope.

"So, Sachio asks me to join him at a little hunting party at his lodge in the forest beyond the neutral ground! I believe I'll go. After all, it might not be a bad thing to find out a little more about the condition of those two we left yonder in the desert. Yes, I'll ride back the very way I just came."

Mile after mile slipped ribbon-like beneath their speeding wheels. Soon they had left behind them almost all sights of the green commons and the fenced fields which lay under the walls of Gretzhoffen town. It was Grahame who first detected, far ahead, a little dust cloud of advancing travelers. He called the attention of his master.

"Glasses, Grahame—find what it is."

Even the stolid Grahame gave a sharp exclamation. "Here come two riding, a man and a woman. I swear, I believe it is the two, both come to life again!

They advanced now more slowly and pulled up at the foot of a little ravine, where a cross trail came in from the right, leading no one knew where, out into No Man's Land between the two kingdoms of Gretzhoffen and Grahoffen. Here the depression concealed them and they awaited the arrival of the two travelers.

That came in due course, but with it almost synchronously yet other events. A sound of shouting became audible. To the right, along a curving cross-road of the desert, there came into view, riding at top speed, whooping aloud as they spurred forward, a ragged band of drunken ruffians—none less than a party of the banditti which in those somewhat lawless days infested this open and little-traveled region, a sort of No Man's Land.

"Come, your money—your valuables!" exclaimed the leader of these ruffians. "You know me? I am Landozi, chief of the Brotherhood. My men like work none too well, and we must eat and drink. Your money, please—or we will take it whether or not you please."

Contemptuously, Count Frederick reached into his pockets and flung upon the ground before them such valuables as he had.

The bandit now turned to repeat this process with the other two strangers, whom they could not classify as friends or foes of those whom they had now found in the motor car.

"What have we here—a woman, and a beautiful one!" exclaimed the bandit chief. "She wears no jewels—perhaps she has not much money for us. But still, there are other ways. What say you, my fellows, shall we hold her for a ransom?"

The man Roleau here raised his hand and spoke with authority

"My friends," he said, "what I have is little and it is yours, for you are my brothers and I know you must live as well as I. I know you are friends of the king's troops—shortly we will ride thither together, if you don't mind. As for this lady, lay no hand on her. I tell you she is a highness of a foreign land, none less than America across the sea."

"And why not fit for ransom then?" demanded the bandit chief.

"Because, I tell you she is one of the ladies of the king's household—she is protected by King Michael II himself, no less. She is of his rank in life, I tell you, my brothers."

Irresolute the bandit turned toward his men, but a murmur of assent ratified what Roleau had said.

"Good!" said he suddenly. "I know you well, Roleau. The lady is safe with us. We will do more—we will accompany you to the walls of the city itself, so that you may be safe from any of our brotherhood."

Under the walls of Gretzhoffen itself they met a troop of the king's horse, riding out for practice. Their officer was not unknown to Count Frederick—and for that matter, the leader of the bandits, Landozi himself, seemed not unknown. Loitering along, they rode now up to the city's gates.

Yet another event transpired before the two parties separated near the city's gate. An additional party of horsemen, riding hard from the desert, appeared—none less than Count Sachio, a friend or two and a small group of retainers!

"Sachio!" exclaimed Count Frederick. "My friend, you come but just in time."

"I may well believe it," said Sachio dryly," gazing at the assemblage about

"At Last We Have It!"

him. "Had I met this gentleman," he nodded toward Landozi, with whose identity he was well enough acquainted, "perhaps I might have needed greater argument."

"All is well that ends well, my good Sachio!" exclaimed Count Frederick. Be my guest instead of my host. Ride with me now to my own home and at another day I will return with you to your hunting lodge."

"You know this lady?" asked Sachio aside, nodding towards Kitty.

"But slightly," rejoined Count Frederick. "And you?"

"But slightly," smiled Sachio, and he told no more.

"Who is she?" asked the captain o the troop, sotto voce, of Roleau.

"I tell you all, my friends," answered that sturdy soul. "She is a highness from abroad, an excellency. Take no liberties here. She goes to the palace—she is to meet the king."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE BROKEN COIN

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by

GRACE CUNARD

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SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

THIRD INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER XI.

The King of Gretzhoffen.

"You majesty does me honor."

It was with simple dignity that the young American girl spoke these words to the monarch in whose presence she found herself fresh from her late adventures.

"We could not too much honor so charming a representative of your great country, my dear young lady," said Michael.

"Do not misunderstand me, your majesty," resumed the young woman. "It is more than possible I have been brought before you under false pretenses. I am not a person of rank, am indeed but a prisoner taken yonder by outlaws. But for the wit of my servant I think I might have been held for a ransom."

"It were large ransom would be fit for such hostage as yourself, mademoiselle. Whatever it was it would have been paid, had we but known!"

"I thank you, sire. Perhaps there will be no future need. In sooth, from the way the bandit chieftain looked on another of our party, I would rather think he would prefer him to myself as hostage."

"Whom do you mean?"

"The Count Frederick, sire."

"Again the Count Frederick! He seems always to come into my affairs." The annoyance in the king's face was unmistakable.

"He has been much concerned in my own."

"How, mademoiselle?"

"I must explain? Sire, I came to your country only in my professional capacity—I had no more urgent errand than to find the half of a certain missing coin. The other half had come into my possession by chance. It was my fancy—"

"What, a broken coin? You interest me. Mademoiselle, I felt from the first moment that eventually we would find some common ground of interest. A coin—a broken coin—I know of some such thing myself. There are current stories about it. See, I have it, for my good friend Frederick seems for some strange reason to have a fancy for it himself. Would you like, then, to see it?"

Kitty's eyes flashed in eagerness.

"Above all things, sire! It would complete my happiness to see it."

"Then you shall, assuredly."

He bowed in somewhat adipose gallantry as she extended her hand toward the pudgy palm in which lay the object which for her held such interest. In a glance she saw the identity of the missing half. The remaining words of the inscription—they were there, she was sure. "Torture chamber—treasures of the king;" it was plain to her. These two pieces of metal joined would represent a story worth the having.

"Do you not desire it, then?" The voice of the monarch carried a certain reproach.

"Desire it, your majesty! I should desire nothing so much in all the world. With both halves in my hand—sire, I should feel that the world was mine."

"Why not gratify that wish then, mademoiselle? Listen. Count Frederick desired this very trinket—for a lady, he said. Here is a lady who desires it for herself. Why should we not give it her—why should we not have right as good as his?"

"You cannot mean it for me?"

"But yes, precisely! And listen, my dear young lady. There is something about this broken coin which begins to annoy me. Count Frederick is always referring to it for one reason or another—he has some motive which I cannot divine. Now, of late I have had abundant troubles, many persons who importune me. In these serious times, the people being so discontented, we have matters of more importance than to trifle with this trinket, as I say. You desire it. It bores me. Who better than yourself should own it if you like?"

Kitty stood looking at him, scarce believing what he said. King Michael went on:

"Two things interest me today, my dear lady. First, how to quiet my people; the second, to discover some fashion which shall keep you here in our own country, interested and useful. I am convinced of your own wisdom, your own justice—your own experience in your land as to law and liberty and justice. Sometimes out of the mouth of a woman—a lady of rank, of experience—one might learn the better how to carry on the duties of a state."

"And the duties of the state would dispose your majesty wholly to the good of his people?"

"Precisely. It is as I would have said it, mademoiselle. You Americans are extraordinary."

Kitty took from his hand the broken bit of metal and regarded it thoughtfully.

"I thank you more than I can tell, your majesty," said she, soberly. "It shall be my mission to find out for your people the uncompleted message of this coin."

A silver bell sounded afar in the hall, announcing the approach of a servant. An official of the palace entered and stood motionless near the door.

"What then, Andreas?"

"The Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen; the Count Sachio of Grahaffen."

"Let them enter, Andreas."

Both gentlemen bowed deeply as they entered and each kissed the royal hand respectfully. Kitty ignored Count Sachio and bowed but coldly to Count Frederick.

Count Frederick, in whose mind seemed to linger but scant remembrance of any unpleasant scenes in which he had figured, smiled now, and after the American fashion, as he fancied, held out his hand.

Kitty could not refuse it. Quickly she shifted the broken bit of coin from her right hand to her left—quickly, but not so quickly as to escape the keen eyes of the man who faced her now.

"Count Sachio, you are welcome from your kingdom to ours. I believe you have never heard of the young American of distinction who has come among us of late—you have not met?"

Kitty looked calmly at the count and made no reply.

"Pas encore, votre majeste," replied Sachio in the common language used

The Man Listened Respectfully and Took the Missive.

at court with strangers present. "Not yet." His face flushed deeply as he lied.

"Ah, very well, then it is time. At the ball perhaps we shall all be present. Mademoiselle, your invitation shall come from us duly."

Kitty took this to be her dismissal, and with deep thanks and the best curtsy she could muster, bowed herself from the room, after to be escorted by a grave official to her car.

CHAPTER XII.

Before the Ball.

In her hotel, albeit something of a subject of gossip, as she herself could not but know, Kitty felt herself at least safe from any such occurrences as of late had been her lot. Roleau still was missing.

It was the morning of the great black and white ball when Kitty, her gown finally in her own possession, stood before the tall mirror in her rooms to give it its final proving.

The case on her dressing table now held but a few simple rings and brooches, trifling things which had been given her or which from time to time she had purchased for herself.

The only thing of value which lay upon the table was something which she most wished to conceal, and not to display. The broken coin—how could she make sure that it would be safe?

Kitty swiftly conceived a plan which she fancied would afford greater safety for the cherished coin. There was at hand no machinery of ceremony, even had she been familiar with it. "The simplest way is the best," said she to herself, her lips compressed.

She sat at her desk and inclosed the broken coin in a double sheet of paper. Upon one sheet she wrote these few words:

"Your Majesty, the young American woman so honored with this gift asks its safekeeping for a little time."

She added no signature, but on the envelope—the best the Hotel Ritz could furnish her—she wrote a simple address: "For the King, at the Royal Palace, to be delivered at twelve midnight promptly."

In fault of better messenger, Kitty telephoned now to the bureau of telegraphs and asked for a reliable messenger. When presently he came she entrusted this missive to him with express instructions that he should leave it in the hands of some chosen servant of the king who would be sure to deliver it at the hour of midnight of that very day.

The man listened respectfully, took the missive, and started for the door. Passing, he almost ran against a gentleman in the hall, and dropped his envelope as he did so.

"Your pardon," exclaimed the gentleman, raising his hat; and himself picked up the envelope. The messenger did not notice his fingers quickly closing upon it, feeling it here and there as he presented it to the bearer.

Relieved now of this care, and satisfied that her plan would provide for the safety of this prized possession for that night at least—Kitty passed on to other matters.

Of what use, after all, was half this coin, while the Count Frederick still retained the other half—taken from her by force, by violence?

She stood for a time, her fingers at her lips, engaged in thought. "I am going direct to Count Frederick himself and ask him for the other half of the coin. He knows the king has given me his half—perhaps he will relent and let me match the king's half of the Gretzhoffen coin."

With her to think was to act. A half hour later, ready robed for the street, she was in her car and on her way to the palace of Count Frederick.

They knew her at the count's palace now—or thought they knew her—and so no questions were asked when she applied at the door. Pending the coming of the count, who was at home, as she learned, she was shown to a reception room close to the entry door. As she sat here, she heard footsteps approaching, heard voices in conversation. She knew that Count Frederick was there, but not alone.

Kitty listened shamelessly—for now indeed all was fair in war for her in case like this.

She heard Count Frederick address his companion as "My Lord Minister," and again as "Danislaw," so knew that it was none other than the prime minister of Gretzhoffen with whom he was conversing.

"My friend," she heard a hard, incisive voice declare, "this ball tonight is the crowning mistake of the entire year. It may mean the ruin of Gretzhoffen. I tell you, Count Frederick, revolution is in the air. The people are demanding the answer to all their sufferings, to their poverty, their anxieties. That answer, if we do not use every means to change it, surely will be written red!"

"But what plan do you propose, my lord minister? What can I do?"

"One thing. Let me be blunt and brief—have the king sober tonight! I shame to say those words—but those are my words to you. Have our monarch—whom we reverence—sober tonight! If the people see him drunken, if they find him careless, indifferent, in times like this—pouf!—revolution. I tell you, and the answer written with the pen of blood."

Count Frederick apparently paused at this. There was a hint of something suppressed in his voice when at length he did reply.

"My lord minister, I'll see the king!"

Kitty thought that now they clasped hands. She heard the prime minister departing, each giving the other formal words of courtesy.

Now she heard Frederick calling to his servants.

"Rubinoff, Franko—any of you rascals—well, you, Rubinoff. Go at once to the apartments of the Count Sachio and ask him if he will join me at once."

Kitty, still trembling in suppressed excitement, waited yet longer before declaring herself. She heard Frederick pacing up and down in the room, muttering to himself—heard also after an interminable interval the footsteps of another in the hall—heard Frederick greet him.

"Ah, Sachio, you are welcome indeed. We have news for you, my friend—news that may go well with our plans."

"Command me, my dear Frederick."

"I ask you, my dear Sachio, to do an easy, pleasant and interesting task. It is no more than to go this afternoon, to win in some fashion into the presence of King Michael the Second, our beloved monarch—whom we both reverence!—and then and there, by what means shall seem most expedient, to induce him to drink more wine than ever he did in one day in his life."

Count Sachio laughed loud and long.

"For what purpose, my good Frederick?" he inquired at length.

"For a plain and definite purpose! Listen. As you know, I have had my eyes on the throne of Gretzhoffen since the death of the old king. That throne is rightfully mine, and will be mine. This land is full of discontent—like your own, yonder. The people complain. They are on the very verge of revolution at this moment. This great ball tonight—the thought of its expense has enraged our people. Now, if tonight they see our beloved monarch—whom we both reverence—in his usual or more than his usual state of intoxication—then there's the match to the powder mill. The revolution is begun. The explosion is made. It will be too late, then. Their wrath against the weak Michael—dissipating, wasting their substance for them—will be unappeasable. For the rest

At the Black and White Ball

—I have made my plans. My own regiments will be faithful. The regiments of the king are none too faithful. The banditti of the desert are with us. Tomorrow there will be a new king in Gretzhoffen, and that king will be—Frederick the First."

Kitty slipped from the room. The hall was empty. An instant later she was out of the great entry and passing to her car.

At her hotel once more she hurried to her room. Here was somewhat to be done. She knew the plot now—all was plain as to the intentions of Frederick in regard to the kingdom of Gretzhoffen and to the monarch who held the throne.

"Your majesty," she wrote in her rolling hand now, "the young American so much honored by your gift—which is returned to your care at midnight tonight—has by chance learned of a plot to injure your majesty and to injure the kingdom of Gretzhoffen as well. Trust her to explain when opportunity shall come. Meantime have the word of one who is solicitous for your safety. Drink no wine. Beware."

Once more she telephoned to the bureau of telegraphs, called for a messenger, and sent her simple missive to the king.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Prisoner.

Having dispatched her messages, Kitty Gray sat alone once more in her room. There came to her mind once more the reflection that now she had not even one portion of the broken coin. As to that which had gone to the king, she felt fairly sure that she might regain it. As to that which had been taken from her by force by Count Frederick, she was far as ever from its possession.

"The simplest way is the best," said she once more. "I'll go back there again."

"I was not so fortunate as to find monsieur the count at home before," she explained to the attendants who met her at the door.

"Monsieur the count has gone out but now."

A sudden resolution came to Kitty's mind even as a sudden flush came to her cheek.

"So? Then I will wait his coming. If you please, the apartments of monsieur the count."

The man left her, and she closed the door. An instant later she was at work turning over the articles on the dresser, peering here and there, looking this way and that—and unsuccessfully.

But meantime the attendant who had left her, anxious to be of service to his master, sent out posthaste to summon Count Frederick to his return. He met the count himself, and yet another attendant, upon the point of entering the palace. The newcomer was talking to the count excitedly.

"Excellency, I tell you the woman is outwitting you. She sent her half the coin this very morning—sent it to the king by special messenger. I saw it—I felt it in the envelope, I am sure. There is some plot afoot. And I brought the news as soon as possible, but have searched for you long."

"Come," said Frederick, and he hastened the more when he met the messenger advising him of Kitty's presence in the palace.

Her search still uncompleted, Kitty heard footsteps approaching, and turned desperately like some trapped animal. There was no escape—the narrow window, as she knew, was two stories above the court below. And even as she stepped to the door she met there the smiling, sardonic face of Count Frederick himself.

The honor is mine, mademoiselle!" said he with icy politeness. "True, I had not expected you."

Shamefaced, confused, for once unable to make any explanation, Kitty could but stand and stare at him. An instant later she heard the click of the lock and the passing of footsteps in the hall once more. She was alone! She was a prisoner!

She sat alone, helpless, unanswered in spite of her pounding on the door, her cries for help, until she was utterly weary—until the shades of night came.

She looked at her watch. The hour was approaching eleven. The great black and white ball was now in progress at the winter palace across the city.

She went to the window and looked out into the night. All the court was dark—save one window directly below her on the opposite side, fifteen feet below, ten feet across the narrow courtway. Even as she looked down at it she saw a face thrust out—a face upturned towards her.

"Roleau!" she exclaimed. "Can it be possible? Roleau, help me!" Kitty extended her arms appealingly. "I am a prisoner here—they have locked me in—there is no way out. Help me!"

Roleau's own presence in the palace she did not at the moment undertake to explain. As a matter of fact, he had but that day come in from the camp of the banditti, where he had been detained.

"Wait," he cried. "I will show you."

An iron grating, with the stairs of a fire escape, led down directly in front of Roleau's window. He came out upon this, braced his legs across, and back under the rail, and held out his mighty arms.

"Jump," he cried; "it is safe."

An instant later she was on the iron grating and into the window, and Roleau, gaunt, unshaven, smiling, her friend and rescuer, had led her to the door.

"Come," he said, and without pausing for any discussion, he hurried out, she following.

"It is late, Roleau," whispered Kitty back to him. "It is eleven o'clock. The king goes to the great ball at midnight. Hurry, I must be there. Quick!"

CHAPTER XIV.

The Ballroom.

In his own apartments that evening Michael the king had passed the time in somewhat preoccupied fashion. Left alone, and hence unhappy in his counsels, he welcomed the announcement of the chamberlain who advised him of the presence of the Count Sachio of Grahaffen, who wished to pay his compliments to the king.

"Come then, my dear count," said Michael to him. "You are very welcome at this hour. You will have a glass of our own vintage—I have a cask of Lucoyen which is quite worth while."

"With all my heart," said Count Sachio.

The attendant removed the cork from the bottle reverently, poured slowly, gently, the amber fluid into the tall glasses upon the table. It was at that moment that King Michael bethought him of a certain message handed to him but left until now unopened. He frowned as he looked at the word, irreverent when addressed to royalty, and urging haste. "'Important.' Is it so? What shall I do, my dear count? Throw it away?"

Count Sachio cast a glance upon the inscription.

"Your majesty," said he, "it is in the hand of a lady. By no means throw away any letter a woman writes to you—and by no means write one yourself. Am I not good counsel?"

Smiling, King Michael broke open the small hotel seal, frowning as he did so at what seemed to him undue familiarity on the part of someone, he knew not who. But as his eyes ran over the few lines of the message his expression suddenly changed. The words remained deeply written on his mind. "Your majesty . . . young American . . . drink no wine."

Count Sachio looked on respectfully, his glass arrested, naturally venturing no comment. King Michael made no effort to turn the conversation. He left his wine untasted!

"Indeed, our people also are growing in audacity," went on Count Sachio presently. "But I pledge your majesty a long and happy reign." He raised his glass and waited.

"Drink heartily, good Count Sachio," said King Michael. "As for myself, I have dined but lately, as I said. The doctors say dreadful things to me. You excuse me?"

He had poured but a small portion in his own glass, and raised his hand against more.

Sachio was obliged to admit to Count Frederick, whom now he early sought, that he doubted the full success of his errand.

"Leave him then to me," exclaimed Frederick—"he never fails to do as I ask. Make ready for the ball—time presses now. I myself will hasten to see the king before he leaves for the winter palace."

Frederick, making urgent excuses now to enter the apartments of the king after his arrival, found the monarch in the same apartment, stolidly regarding the now empty bottle of wine.

A certain idea came to the brain of Michael, the king, as he now acknowledged the visit of Count Frederick at so late an hour. If this message had warned him not to drink wine—then there must be someone in the world who wished him to drink wine. Why? Who was that person? Might it not be this man here—Count Frederick—the man whom really he feared? If so, would not feigned intoxication serve well to discover the other's nature?

Reasoning thus, King Michael with small exertion of histrionic art managed to give an excellent imitation to his friend of a monarch far gone in wine. Frederick, pleading fatigue and thirst, plied him farther, and Michael apparently yielded, using still such arts as served him for the time being.

When, not too long before the appointed hour of midnight, Frederick left the palace, he left behind him as he was assured, a monarch hopelessly fuddled.

So the lights flamed on at all the windows of the Winter palace.

Suddenly the music broke, crashed and swept into the national air. A murmur went about! The king! The dancers hastened back to the sides of the room. All eyes turned toward the great entrance.

Under the festooned flags, escorted by his uniformed officers, himself wearing all his decorations and garbed as a king should be, there appeared King Michael of Gretzhoffen.

The hour of midnight struck. The eyes of more than one man on the great dancing floor—including those of Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen—looked at the king amazed. Here was no staggering monarch, maudlin in his cups, come to make a spectacle of himself before his people. No, he walked straight as any. And behind him from the street there came not shouts of derision, but something of welcome, of confidence—a pitiful expression of a people willing yet longer to endure a king.

At the king's side, her hand on his arm, there walked the figure of a tall and beautiful woman, arrayed—as were all those others present—in a costume of black and white—a tall young woman whom not many of those present recognized. A few passed the word, "The American!"

The music of the royal anthem ceased. An instant and the orchestra broke out once more in the sensuous strains of a southern waltz. King Michael as yet did not dance, but he gave word that the ball should proceed. A uniformed officer of the court now approached Count Frederick as he stood not far removed from the royal presence.

"Monsieur, the count," said he deferentially, "I have had for some hours in my possession this package which I have not opened. It is marked to be presented to his majesty at midnight here. Do you think it should be delivered?"

Even as they spoke the king himself, accompanied, in accordance with his request, by the young woman who

She Heard Frederick Calling to His Servants.

had entered with him, approached Count Frederick. He raised a hand to beckon to the official.

"Your majesty," whispered Kitty Gray, "that is the package which I myself sent you this morning—take it quickly—I marked it for you at midnight."

"Shall I open it for your majesty?" Count Frederick bent forward politely.

"No," said Michael. "I know the one who sent it. Let herself open it now!"

Kitty broke the simple seal upon the plain envelope in which she had enclosed the coin that morning. She smiled at Michael radiantly now, and at Count Frederick, though not radiantly.

The dance swept on, the crash of reed and brass filling the arched dome of the great salon. In through the great doors came the cries of those not splendidly garbed, those who stood without the palace—"Long live the king!"

But the king stood curiously regarding the change in expression which he saw on the face of the young American.

"Well, then, mademoiselle?" said he.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Broken Coin

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by Grace Cunard

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SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

FOURTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER XV.

If Your Majesty Please.

In full view of the spectators, who now had left the dancing floor and gathered in groups at a respectful distance from royalty, Kitty received the envelope from the messenger—the same packet which she had herself sent to the palace that morning for delivery at midnight.

She did this with a fine air of insouciance, for she felt quite sure that success now had met all her plans; nor did the outward appearance of the packet afford any reason to suspect otherwise.

Yet, even as she took the envelope in her hand, there came to her a sharp conviction that something was wrong. It had a strange lightness—it did not seem quite the same as when she herself had sealed it that morning. Hastily, she opened the envelope, her lips compressed. It was empty!

Yes, the mysterious coin was gone. Entrusted to the safest messenger she could find; sent to the king himself; received by the king's trusted official; guarded, as was to be supposed, every moment of the time since it had left her hands—none the less, the coin had disappeared as though some specter hand had abstracted it.

The blank book of surprise which came to her face was something not to be mistaken. King Michael frowned. "What is this, mademoiselle—are we made the subject of some sport? How now?"

Kitty stood regarding first one, then the next of the faces about her. On the countenance of Count Frederick she read only chagrin and surprise equal to her own. There was no trace of guilty knowledge there—she was sure of that. Then another hand had come into the game! Some other mind also was interested in the mysterious coin of Gretzhoffen.

"What then, mademoiselle?" demanded Michael, himself not yet so fully advised as others regarding the nature of this packet which had been intended for him. "What was it that you were so good as to intend sending us?"

Kitty dared not answer this direct question. She concluded quickly that it would be far safer to add as little as possible to the number of those who knew the full story of the traveling coin.

"Your majesty," said she, turning upon him so dazzling a smile as would have made any man forget all else. "It was nothing! It was but a small favor I would have sent your majesty, to show the acknowledgment of my own country, since your majesty has done such honor to me tonight. Perhaps someone in my humble menage has been unfaithful—if so, it was but small loss after all. If your majesty will forget it and give me a few added days of grace, I will explain—I will try again, I hope with greater fortune."

Michael was ready enough to agree to anything which would bring back to his society this dazzling young creature who stood beside him.

"Very well, mademoiselle," said he, "as you like."

A certain relief was felt by all concerned, as now he turned and made a sign to the leader of the orchestra, who stood, baton poised.

"With us, excellenza?" The king offered his arm. The king and the young American, of whose origin he knew, and apparently cared to know, nothing whatever, were the observed of all. Michael at least could dance, and as for Kitty, she was an American girl.

As they swept on in the evolutions of the dance, Kitty caught sight of the dark face of Count Sachio.

That she had earned this man's dislike, or at least, had deeply hurt his masculine vanity, Kitty was well enough aware.

As for King Michael, he was extraordinarily sober; which, in his case, was equivalent to saying that he was not extraordinarily happy.

Count Frederick evaded the throngs about the king. Unwillingly he turned away his eyes from the beautiful figure of the young American as she danced. He never had seen a woman who thrilled him thus. He himself did not dance. This was no evening of pleasure for him. He had other plans.

Count Frederick started toward the door before a second thought came to his mind. If there should for any reason be miscarriage of his plans—if there should be need for yet greater delay before his final overt act was committed—then he ought to have a care to retain some footing in the king's good graces. Because, revolution or no revolution, the throne of Gretzhoffen was not worth having unless his owner had both halves of this missing coin. Frederick cared not to be a penniless king, and only the united coin could give any king of Gretzhoffen actual wealth and actual power.

The murmurs of the people, vague, indefinite, had from time to time been audible at the open door of the grand entrance.

"Why do we starve while they dance?"

They began to edge towards the palace steps, a dark, dense mass. The soldiery were not eager to oppose them with steel. The soldiers were themselves of the people. Moreover, they had had small cause for loyalty to the king and court of Gretzhoffen. They were ill paid and ill governed.

The people lacked leadership. Count Frederick had hinged his own plans of action upon one event—the public disgrace of the king—and that event had not occurred.

He frowned as he stood looking out over the dense mass which filled the streets. Even he began to feel, almost in spite of himself, some sort of a vague pity for these less fortunate ones.

Still over the voice of the strings and reeds rose the low mutterings of the mob, strange to hear, impossible to describe.

King Michael heard this sound. All heard it, this voice of the people, as yet undecided. The king's face paled—terror smote home upon his soul. The courage of his usual alcoholic stimulant being tonight denied him, his weak nerves gave way.

He saw Count Frederick, now returning to the salon, from the great entrance door. The latter saw the terror on his monarch's face, and recognized on the instant the opportunity for himself to strengthen his own position in the king's good graces.

"Your majesty," exclaimed the astute nobleman, now advancing and offering his hand, "forgive me! I was in fault today in my conduct toward your majesty. 'Twas but a mad jest of my own. Give me but opportunity to prove my loyalty to your person and our country, and you shall not find me lacking. The people are about us—yes, it is true—there is danger of revolt, of revolution. I shall not attempt to deny that; but give me leave

"Come to Me Tomorrow at My Hunting Lodge."

to handle them, your majesty, and I promise you safety. I promise you to send them away.

"You are indeed my friend, after all, Count Frederick!" exclaimed Michael. "What you counsel seems wise. Use your own discretion, but disperse them—disperse them."

Count Frederick, hastened to address the people, who now halted, uncertain as to what move next to make. His own agents had been among the people, and had made known his own plans. Yet here was their master, evidently, for some reason, disinclined to give the word for actual outbreak, and now counseling calm consideration, dispersal.

"My good people," began he, as he stood at the head of the great stairway above them—"his majesty thanks you for the honor you have done him in coming out upon this occasion. He himself has found great pleasure in coming here to meet you tonight, although he arose from a sick bed to do so. He wishes you to be calm in these stirring days. He has planned this great ball in order that you might see the equaminity of his own soul in these events, so difficult alike for a king and his people to endure. Therefore, remain loyal to your king, whom I represent before you. The ballroom soon will be cleared. Let the streets also be cleared. Go to your homes. Wait, and depend on us who have your true welfare at heart."

There surged up to him now the figures of more than one man, some in uniform, from places in the throng, in the street. "What is it—what is wrong—why do we not have the order to march on the palace?" they demanded eagerly.

"All's wrong," whispered the Count them. "For some reason, best known to himself, the king is not drunk tonight, but sober. His people are not turned against him—on the contrary, they seem to respect him more than they have done for months—there would be division among them if we started a new revolt now.

"Here, take this gold, my friends," he added, and stripped himself of some considerable sums he had brought with him. "It is all I have Give it to those who need it most. Take them away from here—let them go to the drinking places. See that these places are filled now, and that the toast shall be 'Long live King Michael!'"

"We may not yet cry 'Long live King Frederick?'"

The nobleman shook his head. "Not yet," said he. "They still shall cry 'Long live King Michael.' That will do for the time at least."

Count Frederick returned through the great entryway and rejoined King Michael where he stood. "Your majesty," said he, "your people are returning to their homes."

"Frederick, my friend, my savior!" The weak king, his features working, grasped the hands of the stronger man. "You tell me they will disperse?"

"Even now they do so, your majesty."

Kitty, by this time somewhat forgotten in the king's vacillating mind, stood looking from one to the other of these two. As she read the situation, it carried something of defeat to her. An instant ago she herself had dominated the scene. Otherwise now; for Count Frederick gave her a somewhat sarcastic smile. It was the time of his triumph and of her discomfiture.

"Mademoiselle is distrait?" said he. "She is not dancing—she will return to her hotel, perhaps? What can one do for mademoiselle?"

Kitty turned toward him calmly. "If I might ask one of you gentlemen to secure my car for me?" Count Frederick smiled and bowed as he turned away.

But Kitty was not so soon to leave the great salon of the palace that night. She passed toward the entrance slowly, caught in the crush and confusion of others who were crowding out in the fiasco of the much-vaunted black and white ball. For the time, she found herself in the shelter of a great column, where she was willing enough to pause. As she halted here she heard voices just behind her—one deep voice, which it seemed to her she had surely heard before.

"It is a pity that the affair did not come off tonight, your excellency," she heard another whisper hoarsely. "We have everything in our own hands now. I have all the plans of the fortifications, the maps of the avenues, the specifications for each street crossing. It would have been entirely simple for the army of Grahoffen to march through this ramshackle city as it liked."

"Yes!" broke in the deep voice which haunted Kitty's memory, "I suppose so; but what would we do if we could not pay our troops the next day? How much better off than Gretzhoffen would then be our own case? No, Frederick is right in his main plan. The throne alone is worth nothing—it is worthless in his kingdom or in our kingdom, or in any other—a poverty-stricken kingship is no business for any man. Why have you not a diagram of the treasure's burial place—with that, now, the matter would be somewhat different tonight."

"Hush!" she heard the other voice whisper. Apparently warned, at least, by their suspicions, they moved away, although Kitty shifted her own position so that her presence was not known.

Was it Count Sachio's voice she had heard—was he, the king's friend, Count Frederick's friend, the worst traitor of all, and was he also plotting for the restoration of the two lost bits of Gretzhoffen coin?

"Which way should she turn now? To Frederick? Impossible. To Michael? Equally impossible.

The two men whose talk she had overheard passed now from behind the pillar toward the interior of the palace. Apparently they were known there and welcome, for surely they were not stopped by any of the king's guards or chamberlains, and Kitty herself, equally well identified, passed readily just behind them.

Kitty needed but one glance at the man she trailed to see it was indeed Count Sachio whose voice she heard.

The men passed now to a little room at one side of the main hall, which traversed that portion of the palace. A window and a door, both lightly curtained, opened from the hall within. Kitty, as she drew up, could see them now—Sachio, and one whose identity she did not know.

"Listen now," she heard Count Sachio's voice boom out, since here they felt themselves quite safe from intrusion; "listen, while I tell you what is the real key to all these matters. It is this document, bearing on

Slowly, Deliberately, He Raised His Right Hand Above the Unsuspecting Girl.

the missing treasure of old King Michael. He died rich, but like a miser, he hid his gold. He left a clue, yes—I have told you all of that. That clue was the broken coin.

"That coin was the same as a deed in the old days. All transfers of realty, as you remember, were made on parchment, written in pen, and the parchment always was cut in two pieces on a waving line. The seller kept half the parchment, the buyer the other half. And always it ran 'This indenture witnesseth.' The 'indenture' was the waving line which divided the parchment; and the parchment was proof of the transaction, so each holder held half the proof.

"Now, this indenture of the broken coin of Gretzhoffen witnessed that Michael the First had transferred to his people his treasure—their treasure—he kept half the deed for himself, or for the man who was to stand for himself. In some way he meant to give the people the other half—that is to say, the other half of the indenture went somewhere, no one to this day can guess where—except myself!

"These papers of old told of the torture chamber somewhere under the fort. Our maps cover that, but they do not mark the spot of the treasure's hiding. Only the old coin restored, indenture to indenture—the one-half to the other—ever can settle that.

"Now, look here, my friend," Count Sachio held up before him a little object, which caused Kitty to start where she stood:

It was the king's coin! Yes, there was the half coin which she with her own hands had sent for delivery to the king on the dancing floor at midnight that night—and Count Sachio, by means which he only knew, had been the thief! It now was plain to her. Here was one more claimant for the treasure of the dead king of Gretzhoffen.

Count Sachio went on. "This is one-half only of the coin. Alone, it does not serve. I know well enough where lies the other half. Within the next twenty-four hours I will have it—I will have both halves within my own hands. Then, my friend, we shall see what we shall see! Events will happen which will surprise this part of the world, at least.

"Come to me tomorrow at my hunting lodge in the forest, at the edge of the neutral lands. That is the rendezvous of the other half of the coin. I shall seek a messenger to secure it. I know well enough how. Have our men there, for I, Count Sachio, will be prepared to show them all the reading of a riddle which has puzzled both these kingdoms for so long."

Had Kitty remained a moment or so longer she might have seen what the conspirators themselves, anxious as they were, did not see. The face of a strange man peered in at the window of the room which they occupied. He, too, could see now all that Kitty had seen, although he had not been noticed by the latter at the time of her departure.

The grand salon by this time was well cleared, and Kitty made her way rapidly toward the main exit. Suddenly she found herself face to face with a little group made up of the king and notables of his court. They too, for a time had been absent from the grand salon—apparently for a certain purpose. King Michael now did not lack the stimulus of wine. "Our fair young American again!" he exclaimed, as he came. "What, mademoiselle has not even yet departed?"

"It is my fault, your majesty," said Count Frederick. "I promised to secure for her a car, but for the time I lost sight of her. The confusion has been so great that it has been difficult to find service of the usual sort."

An attendant of the palace escorted her to her car—willing enough to conclude the events of the day.

"Tomorrow," said she to herself, as at length she composed herself for a brief slumber—"tomorrow I must be at the hunting lodge of Count Sachio once more!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Another Seeks the Coin.

Debarred by his own station in life from participating in any such function as the state ball, the faithful Roleau had contented himself as best might be by remaining at the hotel until the return of his mistress. By morning, as soon as he got word of her presence in her apartments, he sent word that he was in readiness to be at her commands.

"Roleau," she said to him when they met, "listen. We have still more to do. There is still another journey across the desert."

"Whither, excellenza?" inquired Roleau.

"To the hunting lodge of the Count Sachio—the same place where you and I took the part of two horse thieves, Roleau!"

A few moments later the two, once more provided with a speedy motor car, were on their way down the avenues of the capital.

"I think it might be well to drive past the two palaces," said Kitty Gray. "We might pick up some news there. First, let us go to the palace of Count Frederick—perhaps he is not out this early."

But, early though it was, Count Frederick was astir—was indeed ready for the street apparently, as was also his guest, Count Sachio. Even as Kitty's car swept by the palace front they saw the count and Sachio step into their own car, which waited for them.

"Quick!" said Kitty, sinking back deeper in the seat that she might not be observed. "Drive around the block. Don't let them see me." She motioned also to Roleau to conceal himself as best he might. Their own car, swinging around the corner, gave way for the vehicle of Count Frederick, which sped on down the street.

Once more, still undaunted, Kitty directed her own car to pass around the block and stop in front of Count Frederick's palace. This was done in the nick of time; for now, as they passed at lower speed, in order to have time for such examination as they cared to make of the exterior, they saw a man in some sort of official uniform walking from the front down the driveway for the side entrance of the great building.

"Stop!" cried Kitty to Roleau—"I know that man—that is a friend of Sachio! I saw the two of them together last night. It was to him Sachio showed the coin. I heard him tell this man where the missing half was. Roleau, that man has gone to get Count Frederick's half of the coin!"

"Certainly, excellenza," said the stolid Roleau. "Count Sachio also means to put this and that together, does he not? What can we do? Is your excellency game to try one more entrance into Count Frederick's house?"

"Yes," said Kitty. "Come—let us see if we can trace where this man is going."

Once more these two presented themselves at the door of Count Frederick's abode, and were admitted without question.

The two passed without detention through the main hall to the passageway which Kitty knew so well. They followed down this narrow hall, suspecting that the destination of the man whom they had seen about to enter was none less than Count Frederick's little bedchamber.

Their suspicion was correct. Even As they approached they heard someone in the room who had arrived before themselves. Roleau, followed closely by Kitty, stepped up to the door—peered in, and gave one mighty bound.

In the powerful hands of Roleau, the stranger, taken by surprise, was helpless. Roleau clapped a hand over his mouth, another to his throat, and held him until he himself made the sign of submission. "Silence!" hissed Roleau. "Don't move—one word of alarm and I will end you!"

"What are you doing here?" demanded Kitty virtuously—"what do you seek—tell me!"

The man, gone sullen now, looked from one to the other, and knowing well enough what failure would mean for him, refused to speak. "Well, whatever it was," said he at length, "I have not found it. At least, you came too soon."

"I will tell you, excellenza," said Roleau at length. "It will do us no special good to have him join yonder party of which we know. I will tie him up, if your excellency will allow me."

Accordingly he did bind the traitorous official of Grahoffen neck and crop.

"Quick!" said Kitty. Stealing away silently they left the door locked and took with them the key.

CHAPTER XVII.

At Count Sachio's Lodge.

Such speed did Roleau manage to get out of his own car that Kitty and he arrived at the hunting lodge of Count Sachio well in advance of all others bound thither that eventful morning.

Kitty and Roleau moved about very much as they pleased after their entry. It pleased them best to hide themselves in a small room adjacent to the main hall where they fancied the main events of the day would perhaps find enactment. A door and window made connection between these two rooms, and behind the curtains in the smaller room they fancied they could be sufficiently concealed.

But there were others who had an interest in the events to occur in the hunting lodge of Count Sachio that morning. The tangled skein of the mysterious coin was expanding, drawing in yet others. Hardly had Kitty and Roleau secreted themselves before they heard footfalls under the window of the gallery which ran along that side of the chalet. They wondered who might be the author and what his purpose.

It was somewhat later before they heard the mingling of voices and the sound of footfalls.

"Rudolph!" exclaimed Count Sachio. "Why has he not come? What has gone wrong?"

But none could explain to him why Rudolph had not arrived—nor at the time did either Kitty of Roleau know who or what Rudolph might be—although, as a matter of fact, it was he whom they themselves had left tied hand and foot in Count Frederick's palace. Nor could any of these present know that before this time Count Frederick himself, returning to his palace, had found yonder intruder, bound and left helpless, in his own private apartment. The man had made such excuses as he could by declaring that he had been robbed and thrown in the room by a ruffian, assisted by a beautiful woman. And Count Frederick, finding on the floor of his own apartment a tiny handkerchief, had needed scarce more than one guess as to who that young woman had been.

But as to all these side scenes which had been enacted, Count Sachio was altogether ignorant. Wherefore he now walked up and down, now exclaiming his own doubts. His irritation was obvious enough to Kitty as she peered through the veiled curtain and strained her ears to learn what he was saying

Even as she stood intent on what was going on in the main room, Roleau close at her side, also absorbed—the author of the stealthy footfalls on the gallery below the window crept silently up and looked in upon them as they watched—a spy upon those who in turn spied upon others.

"So, she is not alone!" he whispered to himself. "That man with her will make a different proposition. Be-

In the Powerful Hands of Roleau the Stranger Was Helpless.

tween them, they will take away from Count Sachio what I want for myself!"

He slipped in now from the gallery, through the open window. Stealthy as a cat, he crept up inch by inch upon the two watchers.

"I tell you," cried out Count Sachio, crashing his fist down upon the table, "there is no such thing as explaining a thing like this! This failure can never be justified. I sent Rudolph to get the coin—he knew where it was—he was not suspected by anyone—I told him precisely what to do. Has he done it? No. And here we wait. It is something I shall not forget."

These loud words caught Kitty's attention. She pressed forward eagerly, her figure still half shrouded. Her own senses, strained as they were to catch what was going on in the main room, were less regardful of what was going on immediately about her.

The silent man who had spied upon them crept inch by inch toward them. Slowly, deliberately, he raised his right hand above the unsuspecting girl. In that hand he held poised a murderous-looking blade.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The BROKEN COIN by EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

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SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

FIFTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER XVIII.

A New Intruder.

The keen senses of Roleau, schooled in peril, told him of some hidden danger—the very tenseness of the situation warning him. Turning, he saw the upraised weapon, and in a flash a blow from his own powerful arm had sent it flying through the window. It fell clinking on the floor at the feet of Count Sachio and his friends. Kitty, rescued from the danger which she had not realized, sprang back. An instant later Roleau had grappled with the intruder.

Hearing the sound of this encounter, Count Sachio and his companions sprang at the intervening door, broke it in. They found two strange men engaged in an encounter whose cause they could not guess, but both of whom undoubtedly were intruders in this place, and who, therefore, might be regarded as enemies.

"The American!" exclaimed Sachio, as now he saw also the young girl, who was endeavoring as best she might to give assistance to Roleau in his struggle with the stranger.

"Quick, excellency, run!" exclaimed Roleau.

The strange man was not easily to be disposed of, but gave even the powerful Roleau all he liked to do to handle him. Meantime Sachio flung himself upon Roleau, his comrades did as much for the stranger.

In the melee, which slipped from place to place upon the floor, Sachio let fall the little bag with the king's half coin—in his excitement he had forgotten that he still had it in his hand. The stranger, whose shifty eyes caught everything, saw the bag as it lay upon the floor.

Working gradually towards the place where the little bag lay, now underfoot, now scuffed aside by the struggling men, the stranger managed to trip and throw that one of Sachio's friends who pressed him most closely. They fell directly before the packet. Swiftly, the long hand of the stranger reached out and caught it up.

There remained for him no more relish for the fight. An instant later, his crossed arm against the throat of his assailant, he broke away, flung through the open window and left the others to shift as they might.

Roleau, still held in the powerful grasp of Count Sachio himself, struggled furiously, all the time calling to Kitty to make her own escape.

"Roleau!" called Kitty. "Quick, he has it—he has stolen it. We must follow him!" And Roleau did his best to shake himself free.

"Not so fast, not so easily," panted Sachio, whose stern grip still held Roleau's collar. "You will not get off just yet. Who are you, to come prowling about my place—thieves against thieves? You shall tell me what all this means."

"Go, excellency, run!" panted Roleau, still to his mistress. "Leave them to me. I'll come when I can."

Kitty turned, knowing that she must act quickly or be taken prisoner herself.

"Follow me, Roleau!" she cried. "Follow me when you can. I'll leave a trail." And as she caught up a book from the table Roleau guessed what she had meant by this—a paper trail.

She looked this way and that, but could see no trace of the stranger who had thus treacherously intruded upon their own plans. A strange feeling came to her mind that perhaps she had seen him elsewhere before now. Where could that have been? Ransacking her memory she concluded that he must have been some one of the band of banditti who had surprised her and her companions in the desert.

Trusting to fortune to bring her aid, she ran forward in the general direction which she supposed the man had taken. She passed from the floor of the gallery, which held no trace of footprints to the softer ground where she might see the trail, and caught it now. He was running in great leaps towards the edge of the forest, where the road came in. Yonder lay the trail to Gretzhoffen. He seemed bound for that. Yes—she presently heard a sound of horse's hoofs.

"Horses!" thought Kitty to herself, recalling the stables where some of Sachio's mounts were kept—indeed, she doubted not that some might be saddled and waiting in the yard. It was true—an instant later her own flying hoofbeats pursued those now lessening in the distance. And as she fled Kitty left a trail.

As for Roleau, his faithful heart was wellnigh broken when, having seen his mistress follow his advice and make her escape, he found himself in spite of all unable to join her in the pursuit of the escaping thief who had their coin. The grasp of Sachio upon him did not relax, and now others re-enforced their leader.

"Ah, well, messieurs," he said grinning, at length, "you have the argument."

"Search him!" exclaimed Sachio. "I have lost the coin. It was here. It is gone—he has it about him somewhere."

The companions of the count complied, but could make nothing of the search, Roleau stoutly asserting that he knew nothing of it and had it not in his possession.

"I dropped it on the floor in the scuffle," exclaimed Sachio. "Surely this man must have it, or it has wings! I had it in my hand but now, this very moment. That American—surely she is a witch. Did she take it, fellow? Tell me?" He turned furiously upon Roleau.

"Monsieur, how can I tell?" replied the latter.

At last, however, there came the sound of one driving furiously.

"On guard, gentlemen!" exclaimed Sachio. "We do not know who comes—I hope it may be Rudolph."

It was indeed this missing stranger—the man who had been left bound in Frederick's apartments.

It should be understood now that when Count Frederick had returned to his own apartments and found his private room occupied by a man who evidently had been there for no good purpose—a man left trussed up and bound by yet other intruders—he had had some parley with the helpless intruder in the way of learning what had been the cause of his strange plight.

"I know wou, fellow," said he. "You are of Count Sachio's suite. You have been quartered here with him as a guest of this house—and now you would rob me!

"Your excellency," exclaimed Rudolph, "spare me! I was found here in your room, it is true, or near to it, at least, and was set upon by a ruffian and a young woman. Between them they bound me and left me helpless—flung me into your room here as you see. I ask no belief of you. Take me to Count Sachio—I am his man. Let him plead for me. I shall make no plea at all."

Count Frederick found upon the floor a little kerchief, which told him much.

"Very well," said he to Rudolph, "that is precisely what I shall do! We shall go to find your master, Count Sachio. There has been too much mystery of late; perhaps he can explain a part of it."

It was thus, therefore, that Count Frederick and his new passenger had come in a swift car from Gretzhoffen direct to the lodge of Count Sachio, beyond the neutral lands. And having arrived at the chalet Rudolph had lost no time in flinging himself from the car and hastening to explain to his master that absence which he knew would be so resented. Seeing Roleau there in advance of him—and bound—his own rage overcame him and he lost not an instant in casting himself upon Count Sachio's prisoner.

This was not altogether a fortunate matter for any; Roleau, surprised at the attack, and by this time somewhat in possession of recuperated powers, made so stern a heave at his bonds that he broke them; and thereupon addressing himself to the combat once more, soon gave Rudolph all he liked to do.

Meantime Count Frederick, thinking it well to guard all exits of the chalet, himself had gone to the rear, and had found the open window through which Kitty and the stranger had escaped. What he now saw, therefore, in the main room, was his own late prisoner engaged in conflict with Count Sachio's prisoner.

"They find him a Tartar!" exclaimed he to himself; for at that moment Roleau, casting Rudolph aside, made for the outer door of the chalet.

"Stop!" cried Count Sachio loudly, as others would have followed him. "It is useless! Wait—he has not the coin. Why waste time on him!"

They fell back as the count once more took charge of this complicated situation.

"As for you, Rudolph," he exclaimed, "you have come late, and you have failed—you have not the coin that you were sent to bring me."

"Excellency, no—I have failed. That man"—he pointed to the door where Roleau had fled—"he and a young woman caught me even as I was searching for it where you directed me. They fell on me and trussed me up and left me helpless. I stayed there until the master of the place came. It was he who brought me hither—I told him you would make any explanation that could be made."

"And a fine explanation anyone can make!" exclaimed Count Sachio bitterly.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Apaches.

The man who had proved himself the last possessor of the king's half of the Gretzhoffen coin was the most unworthy of any thus far concerned in its destinies. True, Kitty's recollection had been correct—she had indeed seen him among Landozi's condottieri. Yet lawless as the members of that band were, he scarce was fit to claim comradeship with them.

His name in truth was Blake—a renegade Englishman, who had for some time belonged to the underworld of the capital of Gretzhoffen. If, animated by some greater ambition of his own, he now and then joined the bands of the desert rovers, his real preference was for the underworld of the city, where, with his comrades of the cheaper thieving gentry, he might for the most part smoke or loaf in idleness, not concerned in deeds of activity or daring. It had been by mere chance of his prowling nature that he had learned something about the ownership of the broken coin—had guessed that it might have some value, and had resolved to possess himself of it.

As he fled now, therefore, he made not for the desert so much as for the dens of his own sort in the purlieus of Gretzhoffen town itself. When at length, after his long ride across the neutral country, he found himself once more near to what he called home, he cast loose his horse and completed his journey on foot.

At the door of the underground dive, where he counted upon meeting most of his friends, he made the usual sign of admission. It was a choice band of kindred souls who rose to greet him as he entered. They asked him what cheer.

"What have I done—what have I taken?" Swaggering, he pushed them aside and threw on the table in the center of the room a bit of coin which he took from his pocket.

"Something, comrades, I am thinking."

A roar of laughter broke from them, as, a motley group, they surrounded him.

"He is a jolly jester, is it not so, my brothers!" exclaimed one. "A coin! If it were whole it might be worth perhaps a lira or so, but broken—it is worthless. What can we get for this in a bank, my brothers? So, Blake, is this your day's work!"

"You may laugh, comrades," said he, "all you like; at the same time, I venture you that coin will be worth something to us before we are done with it."

"What is it?" exclaimed one, curiously, examining the inscription. "An old Roman coin, do you think?"

"True, there is a mystery about it, my bullies, never doubt that. It is a mystery that will pay well when solved. Besides, it might act as some sort of safeguard for us. There has been plenty of talk of late that our band may need friends to keep us from the noose. Very well, then—I think the ownership of this coin at least will give us friends when we may need them. Guard it well, that same broken coin, my brothers."

"What do you mean?" asked the spokesman curiously. "Who has sought it, then?"

"Such men as Count Sachio of Grahoffen. It was of him I took it. There was pursuing it, also, that same young American—and that ruffian of hers, who serves her so like a dog—Roleau, I heard her call him. My word, he had a grip of steel in his hands—he well-nigh did for me before I could make my escape. I saw Count Sachio drop the coin upon the floor. I threw my man so I could pick it up, and then I fled. My word to you, brothers, I fled at speed! So here I am."

Now, while these thieves of the city were holding their little conference, their bolder brethren of the desert, not so far away in their own rendezvous, were gathered for an evening's converse—a dozen or more of Landozi's band of desert riders, hail fellows well met, friends of the king's troops and enemies, as they boasted, of none but the rich. Their headquarters, as was generally known, lay a little way back on the cross-trail of the main road, between the two kingdoms of Grahoffen and Gretzhoffen, which crossed midway of the neutral lands.

When Kitty fled after the thief Blake, it was at first with no definite purpose of her own; but she had not gone far before she realized that alone she could accomplish little against such men as he; and she doubted not that he was on his way to join his comrades. What then was there to do? Who could aid her?

Even as she rode, the thought came to Kitty's mind of the debonair bandit leader, Landozi, the same who had so gallantly freed her and escorted her to the city's gates but a short time before. She was woman enough to know the impression she had made on the bandit chief—and shrewd enough also to hit upon him as an ally in her own plans. Therefore, as Kitty rode now—not so fast as not to leave abundant bits of paper on the trail so that Roleau might be able to track her—it was not towards any citadel of the law—not to Gretzhoffen town itself—but towards the capital of lack of law; the rendezvous of the ragged banditti of the desert.

They sat, these rude and careless folk, ill clad, ragged, yet not ill content, under the sheltering rocks which made their lair or den on the cross-road in the neutral lands. Cooking, eating, drinking, they spent the time as persons of no more mentality than theirs would spend it—joking, conversing, talking of what they had done, vaporing of what they were about to do. Most prominently in their minds seemed to linger the memory of their little expedition in which they had taken prisoner the Count Frederick and the beautiful young American.

"And the chief let that prize go!" grumbled one. "Out of the whole enterprise we got nothing, absolutely nothing. What the count gave us would not have made two lire apiece, divided fairly among our band. The main prize—the young woman—we got nothing for her whatever. And yet, what a chance for ransom!"

"Such a chance does not come often. But I wonder where the chief himself is tonight. And are the pickets out down the road? In these times we cannot be too careful, for they say that between the two kingdoms war may come, and if so it would be but our luck for one of the armies to ask us to recruit with them."

"Go, you fellows, two of you," instructed one who seemed to be some sort of lieutenant. "Step out and scout down the road a bit."

It was not long after this that the men left at the rendezvous heard in the darkness a woman's scream. With this came the laughing shout of their comrades.

"Ho, brothers!" cried the ruffian who held Kitty in his arms—"By the Lord, 'tis the same!—'tis the young American highness whom we lost!"

"Loose me! Let me free!" cried Kitty vehemently—"I came to you for help. I trusted in you. I am in need and I ask you gentlemen to be my friends."

"What, your friends!" They laughed loudly at this.

"Yes, your leader knows me—do you not remember how he took us captive the other day? He told me then if I needed aid to count on him. Does one of your brotherhood speak falsely?"

They fell back from her now respectfully, impressed in part by what she said, and in part by the fear that they might offend their leader. This latter fear was well placed, for even now they heard the sounds of rapid hoofbeats.

"Hist!" exclaimed one, "Landozi—it is very likely he."

And it was he, the man whom they all respected through their fears. He flung himself from his horse now and strode into the lighted circle.

"What now, fellows!" exclaimed he as he caught sight of the young woman standing there, disheveled, pale. "Do you not know this excellency? What, would you insult her!"

"I came hither for help," exclaimed Kitty, addressing him with such appeal in her eyes as any man would have found it difficult to resist. "I am in need—I am in pursuit of a thief and I—"

"And you ask a thief to catch a thief?" The bandit chieftain smiled grimly.

"No, not in the least—I do not call you so, you brothers of the desert. You yourself, Captain Landozi, told me to come to you if I needed help. Well, I need it now, tonight, this very moment! I am all alone. I need conduct to Gretzhoffen town. I am convinced that the man who robbed me fled thither. What, would you allow one to escape who would rob a woman?"

"No," exclaimed Landozi. "That is not our trade. It is our profession that we take only from the rich; and we do not side with those who rob the weak. Excellency, my word is my word. You come to us for aid, and we should be barren of all honor did we not give you aid. What can we do?"

"Ride with me!" exclaimed Kitty. "Yourself—two or three men—show me the way from here to Gretzhoffen. Shield me against any other possible riders who may not be of your brotherhood. Is it agreed?"

"It is agreed!" exclaimed Landozi, and with small discussion they soon were in the saddle again—Landozi, two or three of his stoutest men and Kitty; and once more she felt the rush of the wind against her cheek, as a good horse carried her forword.

CHAPTER XX.

The Sewer Rats.

"Who was the thief that robbed you, excellency?" demanded Landozi, as they drew up near the edge of the city—did you see him well?"

"Perfectly," said Kitty. "Moreover, I am sure I have seen him before."

"Where?"

"With your own band, monsieur—he was one of those who rode with you the other day!"

"Ah, a slim man—sharp face—white?"

"Precisely—the same."

"I know him—Blake! He was with us that day, yes, but I promise you he is not really of our brotherhood. He is not worthy of association with gallant gentlemen like ourselves. We ride the trails—he creeps through the alleys of the city. We are borderers—he is a common thief. Blake—truly, it must have been he. No one of our own gentry would have robbed a woman. Now, you help me in your own quest. I know Blake's lurking place. He and his kind have a sort of a den in the low quarter of the town. The prefect of police leaves them pretty much alone, because in these times the officers of the law have much else to think about. Their opium lair—their den for stolen goods—yes, yes, I know. But dare you go with me?"

"I must dare it," said Kitty firmly. "Perhaps my friends will follow me—I do not know—but even if not, you and I must get back what he has stolen from me."

"And what was it, excellency?"

"No more than a broken bit of coin, captain, of value to none as it is now, of great value to me provided I can attain it and the other half."

"You need say not more. The errand is enough to interest me—because now I shall have that fellow Blake where I have longed to find him. He shall not ride with us again. But come," he added.

They found their way through the darkening streets in the purlieus of Gretzhoffen town. Under the leadership of the chieftain they threaded street after street, alley after alley, until at length their party descended into a steep gully in a less important portion of the city. A faint light showed through the chinks of a wall which seemed to be the facing of a bank, but which really concealed some [illegible] den within.

"[illegible]er, excellency," whispered [illegible] "is the place where they hole up—like rats in a sewer—and they have no more principles—they are worthy of no more. Come, my men, close in."

He pushed against the door round which shone the gleams of light, and hastened into a sort of passageway. Their entry attracted no attention for the time.

Only two of the gang remained, the others having departed on one errand or other of their own. When Kitty and her companion looked through the little window, which gave in upon the recess under the bluff, they saw sitting close to the table two men—Blake, the renegade, and another of his band. The keen eye of Kitty detected Blake's hand lying upon the table—and near it the object which she sought—the missing coin!

"Quick," whispered Landozi, and as he spoke he broke into the room. Without hesitation he flung himself upon Blake, and Kitty, wishing to be of service, and finding no better means, caught up an empty bottle which stood near and dealt so interesting a blow upon the head of the remaining ruffian as to put him out of the combat for the time. An instant later she had caught from the table the coveted coin.

"Let him go, Landozi—quick! Come! I have got it!" she exclaimed. And an instant later she was in the passageway once more.

She had almost made her way out into the open, when in the semidarkness she felt a strong hand clutch at her wrist—heard a low laugh at her ear.

"Roleau!" she cried aloud.

"No, not Roleau," said a voice she knew well enough—the voice of the Count Frederick.

"So, you have it! Very well, cling to it, then—but don't drop it. To prevent that I will even hold your hand in mine."

"You brute!" exclaimed Kitty, sobbing now in the intensity of her emotions—"after all I have done to get it—and it is mine!"

"Why argue it, my dear young lady?" exclaimed Count Frederick. "I have told you I must have it. I regret as much as you that I must disturb you."

"Release me—let me go!"

Panting, she looked up at him in the half light. What she saw was a face grim and full of purpose—a face which it seemed to her she would always hate—but in which at least there was no trace of any fear.

"Come," he said, and flung an arm about her waist as he stepped toward the open. "Let Roleau fend for himself—I am satisfied with what I have now."

An instant later he halted. From what sounds he heard at the rear, he knew escape was cut off there. And now crowding in at the entrance of the main gallery in which they stood, there came yet others of the thieves' band, barring exit there as well.

Count Frederick, shielding Kitty, stood at bay.

She Caught From the Table the Coveted Coin.

He Broke Away and Flung Through the Open Window.

Count Frederick, Shielding Kitty, Stood at Bay.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Broken Coin

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by Grace Cunard

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

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SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

INSTALLMENT SIX

CHAPTER XXI.

In the Underworld.

Whichever way she turned, escape seemed quite cut off for the young woman, whose adventures now had carried her into such desperate case. Behind her still rose the sounds of combat, where Roleau and Landozi fought with the occupants who remained in the thieves' den. On ahead, in the passageway, others of the gang swarmed in, cutting off exit by the main gallery. And here, holding her as his prisoner, was the man she feared most of them all, as the most apt to win in this contest for the possession of the coin—Frederick, the nobleman of Gretzhoffen, whose resolution matched her own.

She beat at him with her hands as he swung her lightly from the ground, but he only smiled at her protests—only smiled when he saw himself outnumbered by these newcomers who confronted them in the main exit. At bay, he stood beside his captive and waited those who sought to make them both captives.

Roleau and Landozi, seeing that Kitty had escaped, glared at one another for a moment before they understood that they both were her friends. From what they heard they knew that she still was besieged in the main entry way. A moment later Roleau forced his way out the rear entry of the den, closely followed by Landozi, as agile as himself. They armed themselves at the car which had brought them hither, and sprang forward to the entrance of the main gallery, eager to assist the woman whom they both sought to serve.

This flanking attack upon the enemy was more than offset by the march in the rear of the main enemy himself—Blake, the renegade, who, finding himself freed of his assailants, sprang into the passageway after Kitty. She, as he knew very well, was in possession of the coin. He found her there in the company of a stranger—a tall man whom he never before had seen, and who now showed small fear of himself or of the others confronting him. There was no time for Blake to figure upon what relation these two might have—the coin was all he cared for.

"Give it to me!" he demanded as he sprang at Kitty with a raised weapon.

Count Frederick stepped toward him. "Fellow, what is it that you want? Leave this young lady alone."

"He has it! Search him!" exclaimed Kitty quickly, pointing to Frederick himself. That individual experienced a swift surprise at this sudden turning of the tables upon him. But the ruse worked—unceremoniously the apaches laid hands upon Count Frederick and haled him back to the rear of the subterranean passageway. Believing that he had taken the coin from Kitty, they set her advice into vigorous effect at once.

A pair of thieves still guarded the exit, but these now were to meet the escaped Roleau and his confederate, as keen for conflict as they, and better prepared for it. Kitty heard rapid shots, the acrid smell of powder filled the place. Then, before she had further time for thought, she felt herself hurried forward, the strong hand of Roleau upon her arm.

"Quick, excellency," he called, "there is yet time."

As she felt the cool air of the outer world upon her cheek Kitty shook off a trace of her despair. The coin still was in her hand—she might yet escape.

Cut off by some of the apaches from the car toward which they sprang, Roleau turned and hurried Kitty to the two horses which had brought Landozi and herself thither. An instant later they were mounted and fleeing, leaving Landozi to fend for himself, as they well knew he could. What interested them more was the cries of the two ruffians who themselves had sprung to the car and now were cranking it furiously with the intent of pursuing them in their own motor.

Within the den where these things had occurred Frederick, count of Gretzhoffen, now was prisoner to the rat-faced leader of the apaches, the renegade Blake. The latter stood menacing him.

"Why be agitated, my friend?" demanded the nobleman, coolly enough. "You see I have not the coin. The girl has outwitted you—myself as well. I swear, her wit is nimble enough! She has left me—and you—in the lurch, and has escaped once more. She has flung me to you, as Russian travelers sometimes fling something to stop the wolves which pursue them. While you are rending me she gains time! But why rend me? If I had the coin I would give it to you now, for I fancy a whole throat more than I do a divided coin. But you see I haven't it."

"Very well monsieur," said the renegade leader, "I am forced to believe what you say—the coin is gone, no one knows where by now. But you yourself shall remain here until my men bring back those two—the girl and the ruffian who used us so hard in her defense. Landozi—he is safe enough. We do not fear him, for in a way he is our brother. But tell me, monsieur, what is it—this coin? Why do so many pursue it?"

He turned a keen eye upon the nobleman who remained so composed in these surroundings.

"Why, I may tell you but little," answered Count Frederick. "If I had it in my hand now perhaps I could tell you more. But always no sooner do I place a hand upon it than yonder young woman appears out of nowhere and makes away with it again! I have resolved to have it—I admit that. As you know, monsieur, one does not readily give up resolutions of that nature, when formed. Is it not so?"

"Frankly, I own a like desire," rejoined Blake. "I will win—my men will bring her back."

"I am not so sure. I find her most active in her ways."

"Who is she then?—and what is she to you, monsieur?" demanded Blake.

Count Frederick paused for half an instant, as though himself engaged in thought.

"Monsieur," said he, "you ask me a question there indeed! I have not yet myself decided upon that answer. Who is she? She is an American—that is almost all I know of her. She may or may not be of quality in her own land, but she has some desperate errand here in ours."

"With such beauty as hers," said the apache leader, "rank matters but little."

"Stop!" exclaimed Count Frederick. "It is not for you to comment in that way." The blood surged into the nobleman's face as he spoke.

"Why? What is it to you?" The covert sneer on the face of the other showed his own suspicions as to which way the wind might set regarding these two.

"It is no matter what it is to me—nay, I do not know in truth what it is to me," said Count Frederick, irritated almost beyond speech. "She is, as I have said, an American—she has some business here—I know little more."

"And you did not answer my main question—What is she to you?"

The nobleman turned on him angrily, in loathing of such familiarity on his part. "If I could answer that question, fellow," said he, "I would not. Since I am not able to do so, I shall not."

"Monsieur admires that jeune fille!" The sneer of the renegade once more was evident.

"Yes!" Frederick turned full upon him now. "Monsieur admires her!"

CHAPTER XXII.

The Plunge.

Roleau and Kitty learned soon enough that in a race of the best of horses against a good motor car the former has small chance. They heard the chug of the motor coming swiftly on. In turn those in the car could hear the hoof-falls of the fleeing horses. The fugitives had hurried to the rough country at the edge of the desert, but guided by a reckless driver the speeding car clung close to them.

A sudden exclamation from Roleau came back to her after a time. He pulled his horse up strongly, and she herself reined in just in time. Ahead of them lay the brink of a sheer drop of unknown depth.

"Pull off!" cried Roleau. "Get to one side and let them come—let them come on!"

She swerved quickly aside just in time, and pulled up at the brink. There she was the witness of a sudden tragedy.

The men in the car, their eyes fixed only on the two whom they pursued, did not see the brink of the bank in time. Throttle wide open, they came on at speed. Too late they realized what was ahead. The car sped out into space—how far, neither of its occupants ever had time to know.

Roleau's horse dropped into running water as boldly he sprang in out ahead of the car. Saved by his horse, he swam it to the bank. Not so fortunate those in the car. The vehicle turned over even as it fell, and dropped—a drop of many feet, pinning them under it beneath the surface of the stream. They were lost hopelessly, for had the car not crushed them they must at once have drowned, thus imprisoned.

Kitty, trembling at what she saw, remained as though paralyzed by the scene.

"Which way, excellency?" panted Roleau, riding alongside.

"Into the city," cried Kitty, "fast as we can! I will be safer at the hotel."

And so, an hour later, she gave the management of the Ritz yet more cause for wonder, when, in the early hours of the morning, bedraggled, disheveled, pale, she and her unprepossessing attendant pulled up once more in the street in front of the door.

In her own room, after a certain time devoted to her toilet, which left her more at peace with herself, Kitty sat for a time pondering. Yes, she once more had half the coin—that half given to her by the king. So far, so good. But after all, she was as far from the ultimate success of her errand as ever she had been. Her own half of the coin—that which she had brought with her from America—where was it? In the possession of a certain, tall, strong man—a man who had smiled when dangers threatened him—a man she hated with all her soul, as she now persuaded herself. She ought to hate him with all her heart—yes, she was sure of that. Where was he now? At least she had evened matters with him. Once he had left her helpless in the desert—now in turn she had left him the prisoner of ruthless men. Perhaps he never again would see the light of day—his life even now might be forfeit, for all she knew. If so, she would have been the cause of all that.

"They may kill him," said Kitty to herself. "I could not endure the thought of that—it would be my own fault. I will not admit that it was his fault I was used so cruelly by his man. He himself has laid no hand on me until this very night—and then not in rudeness. Indeed, for all I know, had he not come when he did, I myself might have paid the forfeit he may be paying now."

Kitty paused for a time to look at her own face in the glass. It was very pale, very unhappy.

"I must set him free!" said she with sudden resolve to herself. "There has been life enough lost over this already—his must not be added. I will help to get him free."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Count Sachio and His Friends.

Far across the neutral lands, beyond the desert of Intergraffen, in his hunting lodge at the edge of the forest, Count Sachio for long hours of uncertainty had nursed his own wrath and disappointment at the denouement of the scenes which he had seen take place about him. Pacing up and down, refusing food or drink, his rage always turned toward the unhappy agent Rudolph, his unsuccessful messenger.

"You, Rudolph of Grahoffen," he exclaimed at last, "you should have died rather than betray me! Ah, you betrayed our country as well."

The man addressed, now practically a prisoner, and if not an object of suspicion at least one of hostility, sat moody and unhappy in the main room of the lodge.

"I can say no more, excellency," said he. "I failed, it is true. But you do not count the skill and power of those who are arrayed against us."

"How should I count them?" exclaimed Sachio, fiercely. "Why should

Others of the Gang Cut Off Exit by the Main Gallery.

I? Can I explain to my own king—can you explain to him? Bah! man, they come to nothing in life—explanations, excuses, reasons. Results, results, results—those alone count for aught."

"Excellency, I tried."

"You tried—what is that? Rather say you failed, for that is the main thing."

"But, excellency," spoke up another man after a time, a friend of Sachio, "if it is useless to cry over spilt milk—and we cannot wholly mend this pitcher—even the trifle of milk remaining in the fragments may have some value."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, this. The young girl who was the actual instrument of Rudolph's failure—as none of us can doubt—is still alive and still at liberty."

"Well, what of that?"

"If we found her—and perhaps she can be found—we could even pick up our skein at the same knot where we left it. She is somewhere on top of earth—she is not a spirit after all, elusive though she seems."

"He Has It! Search Him!" Exclaimed Kitty.

Sachio grumbled some response, and the other went on.

"These strained times cannot hold together forever—the break will come before long. Our own monarch will not continue to endure this condition, half peace and half suspicion, that exists between the two kingdoms."

"Yes—war!" exclaimed Sachio. "But why war without success? War for plan or purpose or result—yes, we could agree to that. But curse it! man, do you not see that it all hangs on the ownership of this spirit coin? There is the issue. Without that we could gain nothing if we did go to war, not even though we won the war."

"The economy of a king may mean much, my friend," went on Sachio. "Michael, the dead king, was a business man—he saved. The economy of a people is the hope of business—the economy of a king is the hope of a people itself. There are two sorts of folk in the world—those who make mortgages and those who pay them. King Michael the Second of Gretzhoffen is one who makes mortgages. King Michael the First was one who planned to pay them. He saved the money for that purpose—he intended to leave his kingdom rich.

"But where is his hidden treasury? We know something of it—it is under the fortifications of Gretzhoffen. Our own monarch knows so much as that—but no more. He asks me to learn more definitely the location of that treasury—and what have I done? What can I do—unless at length I shall gain not one but both halves of this Gretzhoffen coin? So, is it not plain enough?"

"Thirty years ago, your excellency," rejoined his friend, "these kingdoms did fight."

"Yes, and that was ended by the alliance Michael the First formed with our own prince. Love did that, messieurs—he loved our princess, so all was forgotten. He was a good king and a strong one. There is need for another strong man like him these days—but not like the second Michael of Gretzhoffen. Why, he gave away his very birthright—won by the fair face of a girl—this strange young American, whoever she may be. He gave her the Gretzhoffen coin out of hand, as though it were no more than a farthing, for all he cared—"

"But she cared, that is evidence enough!"

"Yes, she cared, that is true! and so did another care."

"Count Frederick?"

"Yes, now you have named them both," rejoined Count Sachio, his grim jaws set. "The young woman has half the coin, Count Frederick has the other half. They must both be found, and swiftly as may be. Who will ride with me? Not you, Rudolph—someone must do the errand you failed in doing. You, Johann; you, Marco—come. We must bring back not either half of the Gretzhoffen coin tonight—but both halves."

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Quality of Mercy.

A two-fold mental attitude occupied Kitty as she still sat in her own apartment trying to make just estimate of her own necessities and those of another.

"If I sent to the police to rescue him," she said to herself—and now she called "him" one who lately had been her enemy—"they would only laugh at me. They do as they like these days. No one knows whose friends they are—those of the thieves or of honest people. No, it would be useless to tell them.

"I have it!" she exclaimed half aloud. "I see it now. The king is still afraid of his people—he is hid in his own palace now lest he see his shadow—and all the time he is looking for a strong man—the same who he called to his side that night of the ball—Count Frederick. Very well, King Michael wants Count Frederick—and he shall have him. That is to say, he shall know where he is. If the king retains any power in this distracted country, surely he can prevail against thieves such as these. Yes, I will write to the king."

"Your majesty:" she wrote. "It may interest you to know that Count Frederick is being held a prisoner by a band of apaches, in their dive near the sewers in the lower part of the city. Follow the desert road for Grahoffen, take steps leading to cellar of last house on left side of road. Kitty Gray."

The plan worked to perfection—was admirable. Within two hours the king's men had rescued the imprisoned nobleman and brought him once more to the palace, although of this Kitty knew nothing at all.

"Your majesty," he exclaimed when at length he met the king, "I greet your majesty with joy—and I must say with surprise. How could you know where I was—I sought in vain to get out some word."

"This was my advice," rejoined the king, and placed before him the note which he had but now received from the young American. Frederick gazed at it surprised, perplexed.

"Again the American!" he exclaimed. "She seems everywhere. Is it not so? I swear—"

"Vow not at all, my dear count! We do not yet know the end. She writes this from a hotel in the city, but no one knows where she may be now, or what she may be doing."

Meantime the young lady of whom they spoke actually remained at her own hotel, plotting yet other things.

Count Frederick still had charge of her half of the coin—so she reasoned to herself. In all probability he had left it in the room where he slept in his own palace. What better time than the present, therefore, to make one more visit in that dangerous locality?

"Roleau," said she a few moments later, after she had arrived upon this resolution. "Get our car once more."

"Which way now, excellency? Must you still go on in these dangerous adventures? Why not give it up? You may lose your life."

"I cannot give it up, Roleau," replied Kitty. "This time it should not be difficult—we must make one more effort for Count Frederick's portion of the coin."

"That means we must go to the palace?"

Kitty nodded. Soon the car was speeding once more down the avenues.

"Why do they still admit you here?" asked Kitty of Roleau as once more they drew up in front of the count's palace. "I should think they would forbid us both."

"I am a person of no consequence, excellency. Once of the household staff of a nobleman of this land, one is supposed to remain. You think him harsh to me—so it may seem. But these others, they figure that I still belong here. He would not speak to others of the matter at all. So I am still admitted on the old footing."

"But as to myself?"

"Excellency, I may not tell you that."

"Why not?"

"Because the truth may not wholly please you. You see, they admit you because they think you still to be a friend of Count Frederick—one of his friends—I cannot explain."

Kitty, somewhat flushed, did not press the argument. Enough for her that once more they were admitted freely to the palace—and once more passed back through the wide halls until at length they stood at the door of the sanctum sanctorum of the place's master—the little bedroom where Kitty was convinced he kept his secret of the coin.

She placed Roleau on guard in the hall while she herself went about an errand suddenly grown hateful to herself.

But though she sought here and there hurriedly in the drawers of the dresser, here and there in such places as came to her mind, she found nothing—there was no trace of the missing object.

"Roleau," she exclaimed excitedly, going to the hall, "it will take time. Keep watch. I have no idea where he can have left it."

Puzzled, she turned from one corner of the room to the other, examining the furniture, which showed a strange mixture of luxury and asceticism. Close by the head of the little iron bedstead which seemed sufficient to content the master of the place, she saw a delicate cabinet of boule.

The front of this desk was a drop leaf, which pulled out after it was set in place by a metal hinge. Back of this, in the interior of the cabinet, below a series of little pigeonholes, stood a row of three drawers of rosewood, all beautifully fitted.

The eye of Kitty caught these as she sat deliberately engaged in her distasteful but absorbing task. She drew out all three of these drawers and put them on the desk lid before her, examining each in turn. She wondered why she was glad to find there were no letters from any other woman—yes, here was one—but the writing was that of an old woman, she was sure. And here were certain rings, seals, trinkets, a miniature on ivory—even a tight curled ring of gray hair, silken and delicate.

She sat despondent after all her search. The half coin was not here! She had failed once more. Dubiously at her wit's end—for now she knew not where to look further in the room—she sat gazing at the three little rosewood drawers before her.

Suddenly an idea came to her mind. She picked up one of the drawers, and stepping to the side of the cabinet, measured the depth of the drawer against that of the upper case which had contained it. It was shallower than the full depth of the desk by some three inches.

Hurriedly she stooped down in front of the desk, dropping her eyes to the level of the drawers, which in the cunning of the maker had been placed precisely where the level of the human eye would not be apt to fall. She peered back into the recess from which she had drawn the three tight-fitting drawers. Beyond them she saw three little ivory knobs.

An exclamation escaped her. Not for nothing, then, had been her own experience in antiques. She knew something of the cunning the old makers put into secret drawers and spaces in some of their furniture.

She thrust in her hand, grasped one of the tiny ivory knobs, and drew it gently toward her. It was as she had thought—there was a row of three shallow secret drawers in the back of the desk, hidden by the three larger ones which originally she had drawn out. Not one time in fifty would anyone suspect the presence of these secret compartments. The work of the old cabinetmaker was beautifully done throughout. It had been a master mind, and a cunning one, which had designed it and executed it.

A strange conviction came to Kitty that now she was at the end of her quest. Hurriedly her fingers turned over the contents of the little receptacles. One held yet another miniature—a beautiful thing—of a lady whose high and aristocratic features reminded her of some face, she could not at first tell whose. There was nothing else.

The second was also empty—just an address or so in faded yellow papers, treasured for some purpose, she knew not what and could not ask.

The last drawer was filled to the top with tissue paper which had been crushed down. Her hands half-trembling, Kitty began to unfold this tissue. All at once she paused, her eyes gleaming.

The half of the Gretzhoffen coin lay in her hands!

She caught at the little silken cord about her neck, pulled to view the

She Saw the Leveled Barrel of a Revolver Protruding.

little chamois bag thus suspended at her corsage. From this, her hands still trembling in her haste, she brought out the king's half of the coin—that which had given her so much trouble to regain.

"They match—'tis done," exclaimed Kitty, half aloud. And indeed the broken edges of the coin fitted absolutely. Her errand was done—at last she had succeeded.

"Roleau!" she started up now. But even as she did so she stopped once more, arrested, the two halves of the coin still in her hand.

There was a little window at one side of the room, a curtained window—she had not stopped to see whether or not it was glazed. Now through the parted curtain of this little aperture she saw the leveled black barrel of a revolver protruding, its aim directly at her as she stood.

"Roleau!" she called once more, and as she spoke cowered away as best she might from the weapon whose aim was full upon her.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE BROKEN COIN

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

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SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

SEVENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER XXV.

Divided.

As Kitty approached the little room of the count's palace—which before now had proved to be something of a storm center in the affairs of the Gretzhoffen coin—there came to her the conviction that there might be others beside herself who would have some inkling as to the whereabouts of the missing portion of the coin, and who might therefore arrive upon the scene at much the same time as that of her own visit. She was not altogether surprised at the sudden interruption of her labors, just at the moment of her success.

As she saw herself the object of a poised weapon, she swerved aside instinctively—called out instinctively for help.

"Roleau!" she exclaimed, for, womanlike, she had learned the value of a strong man's arm, and her first thought was of the faithful servant who so strangely had attached himself to her own varying fortunes. And Roleau came hastening from his watching place outside the door.

He saw the little room occupied by a man—who now suddenly had entered—and who menaced Kitty, so that, to save her life as she supposed, she was on the point of surrendering to him both pieces of the coin. The sight of his mistress in danger was enough for Roleau. With his customary battle cry he plunged immediately into the conflict, careless of the threatening weapon. In the melee the two half coins both were dropped upon the floor.

Even now the ruling impulse of Kitty did not quite forsake her. She stooped and regained one of the half coins, but the struggling men, shifting here and there in the room, kept her from securing the other. In the blind instinct for escape she fled now to the open hall, taking that direction which led back from the front of the building.

Roleau heard her pass, and could not join her in flight—but he heard her give a cry of alarm whose cause he could only guess. His energies were fully occupied by the combat with this

She Felt a Hard Hand Close Upon Her Mouth.

stranger—whom now he saw to be one of Count Sachio's men. He had noted him at the hunting lodge. He himself had not time to reason as to the presence of this new factor in the general imbroglio, but at last, able to bring his own weapons into play, he stayed the issue for a time. They both had time to recognize one another as they stood, the one as much baffled as the other, and neither quite comprehending what the other was doing here.

Very naturally the sounds of all this confusion could not be concealed. The scream of a woman had rung widely through the halls, and used as they were to extraordinary circumstances hereabouts, the servants could not fail to investigate the cause of this. They hastened in the direction of the uproar, but their advance was stayed by the command of the master of the palace himself.

The men in the room, as they paused for breathing space, heard a steady footfall advancing to the door, heard the calm voice of Count Frederick himself.

"Gentlemen!"

The intruders, whatever the errand of each, took their eyes from one another and turned now, recognizing yet another man who scarce had come in friendship.

"You honor me greatly, gentlemen," said Count Frederick with his usual coolness in any extraordinary situation. "But might I ask why you care thus to disarrange my apartment? Had I known your own curiosity regarding it, I might have asked some of my servants to assist you in a search more orderly."

"I was sent back by my master," began the stranger—who was none other than Bartel, the late successor to Rudolph in Count Sachio's good graces. "He had left certain of his belongings—some silver cases of the toilet, Monsieur le Comte—he did not trouble to ask you about them, and now he sent me—"

"Indeed! That is most plausible! But why seek for them in my rooms, when his quarters were in quite another part of the palace, my dear sir?"

"As to that," replied the other with calm effrontery, "I cannot say. I only came here because the servants told me that this was the room. Of course, if there has been any mistake—"

"Cease, I say," exclaimed Count Frederick, frowning now, his face flushing.

He turned from Roleau to the other intruder in his apartments. Roleau stood dumb. The other shook his head.

"Monsieur le Comte," said he, "the young woman was here when I entered—when this man also entered. She passed yonder—when she had the opportunity—and took with her one half the coin. There lies the other on your floor. She disappeared—we heard a cry—"

Count Frederick stooped and picked up the object pointed out to him. It was his own half of the coin—or that which he had called his own—since he had taken it from her.

So then, he reflected, she had found the way to his most secret hiding place—she was on the very point of success when this last contretemps had interfered with her plans. A new feeling of admiration for her keenness and persistence once more came to Count Frederick's heart. For a moment he stood regarding half-regretfully the bit of metal in his hand.

"I shall not offer this trinket to you, my friend," said he grimly to the man Bartel, as he pocketed the coin, "for of course you were not looking for coins—only toilet articles—silver ones, did you say, sir? You shall take back an excellent set of my own to Count Sachio, with my compliments. Tell him that it would seem ill to me that any guest of mine should suffer risk of loss either to his person or his property while he was beneath my roof!"

With these stinging words, which brought color to the other's face, Count Frederick turned coolly away, and once more faced Roleau. That was in his face now which did not bespeak remorselessness, revengefulness. No, something softer lay in the man's cool gray eyes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Solitary Confinement.

When Kitty in her blind impulse of self-preservation sprang out of Count Frederick's room, she did not at first contemplate continued flight. Once out of reach of immediate danger, she paused, loath to leave what she had come there to obtain, and loath also to abandon her stout-hearted ally in his time of stress. She turned back, paused just outside the door once more. As she did so, yet another door opening into the hall was pushed silently ajar—opened fully. Yet another man, whom never in her life had she seen before, now stepped out. She felt a hard hand close upon her mouth, more than half-stifling her scream for help. "Silence!" she heard his voice insist. "Go on ahead of me

Once more Kitty undertook to scream, and again the firm hand stopped her voice. It seemed to her that some pungent aromatic drug filled the car with its fumes. She struggled less violently. Events seemed to pass by her in a dream, and she regarded them carelessly, apathetically. In short, either in part or in whole, she had lost consciousness.

When at length she fully regained her senses she was alone—alone with a terror which seemed to her more overpowering than any she yet had known. Instead of her own apartments in her hotel, instead of the room of Count Frederick or the hunting lodge of his quondam friend, Count Sachio, she found herself surrounded by four barren walls—in what edifice or in what place, she could not guess. There seemed some sort of door—yes. There was a small, high, barred window; but the latter was at such height as to be almost beyond her reach For the time Kitty was of the belief that her senses must leave her forever. The sense of solitude was a poignant torture.

How long she had thus remained she could not tell, when at length the close-fitting door in one side of the four walls opened. An old woman came in, bringing some food for her. Kitty tried her in every language which she had ever known, but got no answer. The old woman shook her head, and after a time retreated silently as she had come.

Getting no answer to her appeal for help, Kitty sat down once more, fighting herself to retain her faculties, her calm, her poise. Escape? How could there be hope for that? For once she was at her wit's end as she looked about her. She sat moody and silent, too dazed, suffering too much, too uncertain in her own mind to plan intelligently any course of action. She was brought to herself somewhat by hearing the tinkle of some object on the floor at her feet.

It was a bit of stone wrapped tightly in a little wad of paper. Surely it had been meant as some communication to her—from someone outside the room. It must have come through the window.

She opened the paper and smoothed it out. As she read it she wondered how many other persons there were in this strange country who could claim acquaintance with her own plans.

"Better write an imaginary story for your paper and return to America. Give up the coins and you will gain your freedom. Refuse and you will fare badly."

An Old Woman Came In Bringing Some Food for Her.

These strange words suddenly brought Kitty back to a train of thought which for the time had been broken. She felt quickly at her bosom and at her waist for the bit of coin which she had brought away from Count Frederick's room. It was gone! At some time during her journey from Count Frederick's palace to this place—long or short whether it had been, she could not tell—the coin had been taken from her.

Kitty sprang to the sill of the little window and peered out for an instant; but her hold was too feeble. She sank back, not seeing what would have given her great joy to see.

Apparently some eye had caught sight of her face, brief as had been its appearance. In truth, Roleau, hound-like, had run his game to earth. It was he who had caught sight of her just for an instant. Later she heard once more the tinkling of some falling object upon the floor. She picked it up—it was a substantial file, which evidently had been flung through the window by someone having the intent to aid her. This thought gave her hope. Almost as soon as she grasped it she fell to work at the bars which had restrained her.

Meantime, at the scene from which she had been so unceremoniously abstracted but now, Count Frederick remained still pondering on the strange events which had been brought home so close to him. He was too much preoccupied in his concern over the young woman's disappearance to note carefully anything else that went on about him. When one of his household placed a message in his hand, for the time he gazed at it, scarce comprehending that it came from the royal palace.

Since he had left unattended the servant of Count Sachio, whom he had found in his own room, the latter seized the present opportunity to escape from the place and to find his own master, Count Sachio himself—who waited for him impatiently enough at the rendezvous which had been established

"Well, well, then, Bartel," exclaimed the count, "why the delay? What's wrong? You are not going to tell me the same story that Rudolph brought—you have not failed?"

The shamefaced look of the other gave him his own answer. Count Sachio himself gave way to hearty curses of all incompetence.

"The count retained one-half the coin," went on the unfortunate messenger. "I don't know which it was. The girl—the young American—got the other piece. I saw her pick it up. But she did not get both! I don't know which one she did get, but I know that each has one-half—the count and the girl. She must have been carried away by some other man. I heard her scream, then all was silent."

"So all escaped you? It is another matter what I myself may have done as to the girl and the coin—they escaped you?"

"Yes, excellency, naturally I could not prevent the man from escaping, and the count himself allowed the other man to do so."

"What other man?"

"Roleau, they called him—the girl's servant—he follows her like a dog—and fights like one."

"So, there were two others present beside yourself?"

"Yes, it seemed as though everyone interested in the coin came all at once."

"Naturally, the competition asks quick work of all of us. And we will act quickly. Tell me, what happened then?"

"The Count Frederick allowed her to escape—strangely, he seemed to have small resentment for her after all. Nor did he have too much for Roleau, whom he must have ranked a wholly faithless servant. He did not punish him—but even sent him off after the girl! Excellency, my word for it, he seemed to miss the girl as much as the coin—did Count Frederick."

Follow them then, Bartel. Follow Roleau—if you can find him—he will lead you to the girl, wherever she may be. For myself, I cannot guess."

It was this counsel, followed diligently by the unhappy messenger of Count Sachio, which resulted in a quick shifting of the forces of Kitty's enemies. It was true Roleau had gained access to a point within sight of Kitty's window, where still he tried to be of aid to her—still hoped she soon would be able to aid herself. But here he was surprised by these emissaries of Count Sachio—it was none less than the nobleman himself who led the forces now.

Therefore when, after all her toil, Kitty at length managed to make her escape through the barred window, it was but to find herself once more a prisoner—Roleau once more a prisoner with her! The fact of captivity had not changed—only the phases of captivity. She and her ally had only exchanged captors. Who her last prison guardian had been Kitty could not tell. Now, without doubt, she was once more to be subjected to the scant courtesy of the nobleman of Grahoffen.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Counterfeit Coin.

Count Frederick finally aroused himself from the apathy of inaction in which Kitty's sudden disappearance had left him Now he learned that the message from the king asked his attendance at the palace as soon as might be. The king had, it seemed, a communication which he desired to make to Count Frederick at once.

"Confound his royal highness!" exclaimed Frederick to himself. "I never leave him but he asks me back at once. He is always in some trouble, and I am ill-disposed now to be nurse to any king, for I have affairs of my own to trouble me sufficiently."

Nevertheless, grumbling, he went his way to the palace, for the royal will was something not yet at least to be set aside.

"Good! Count Frederick," Michael greeted him. "I asked your return because of a sudden thought that had come to my mind."

"As to what, your majesty? Did it come to you alone, unassisted?"

The king was too much preoccupied to concern himself with sarcasm.

"Yes, assuredly. It is regarding the coin."

"The coin! I thought your majesty cared little for it—so little that you gave it away unasked to one who is not even of our country—a stranger—the young American."

"Precisely. That is true. And I had cause for my act. But, see you, one does not make gifts unrequited. Now the young American has disappeared, and so has the coin. Perhaps, rather, I should reverse that, and say that the coin has disappeared and with it the young American. At least, that is to say—they both are gone. So I sent for you, my dear Frederick, to tell me what to do."

The nobleman stood for a moment but half concealing his real feelings, gauging the man before him, this imitation of a king.

"She was a most charming young person," began the king, trying to conceal his own thoughts. "Do you not think such hair as hers is rare?"

"Rare, indeed, your majesty—she is in all things rare," suddenly exclaimed the count.

"And where is she gone?"

"I do not know—I have no idea."

"But you can find her—you certainly can bring her back."

"I hope it, your majesty—I hope it very much. But then, as to the coin?" he added, somewhat maliciously—for he knew well enough where sat the wind in royal quarters.

"Oh, yes, about the coin. Well, I was only going to ask you to find it for me."

"That seems simple, your majesty! Even though I do not know where the young girl is."

"That is why I ask you, my dear count."

"Agreed then, your majesty. Of what use is a servant of the king if he cannot do the king's will? I accept your errand. I will soon return to you the coin—at least, I hope so. After all, perhaps it has no such value as you seem to think—I am sure it has less value for you than other things that we might mention."

Count Frederick did not add aloud what was in his own mind—the truth—that the coin had more value for him than he at any time before now had believed.

Presently he excused himself from the royal presence and departed to put into effect a little plan of his own which he fancied might blunt both horns of this dilemma into which the naivete of King Michael so suddenly had placed him.

As luck would have it, there had been thrown into his hands the king's half of the coin.

Count Frederick thought for a moment before he made a plan. Then he made a hurried journey to a certain silversmith in whose skill he had much confidence.

"Make me," he said as he laid upon the counter his piece of the coin—"a replica of this—absolutely, line for line, so that I myself cannot tell the two apart. Do you hear me? Can it be done?"

"Yes, excellency," said the workman, "it can be done—so nicely that I myself scarcely could tell them apart."

"Then quick with it," said Count Frederick. "How soon?"

"By tomorrow, excellency, I promise you a duplicate."

It was therefore on the morrow that Count Frederick was able once more to visit the royal palace with a mind more at peace with circumstances. With him he carried what was apparently the king's half of the coin which he had given to the young American so carelessly, and which now at once he coveted again—since the young American herself was gone.

"So soon!" exclaimed Michael. "You are the acme of punctiliousness and efficiency, my dear count. You are indeed a man of results. Go now to my cabinet again and help yourself to such jewels as you fancy."

"No more, your majesty, I thank you. If I have been of service I am pleased. Jewels are not for me. They are for women—and no woman has jewels from me now. I have reformed, your majesty. I shall be taking myself to a monastery next."

King Michael laughed loudly at this jest on the part of his former boon companion. "Not so far as that for me," he said. "I am not yet ready for any monastery. I swear I can remember a queen's face and a queen's figure when I see them, well as ever. And I saw them both here not so long ago. I thought I had secured the chance to see them yet again—when I gave her as our gift this which you have restored to me now. It seems I failed in that. But should the same case come up again for action—should she by intent or accident meet us again—I am in possession once more of what formerly was mine. Perhaps the affair could be undertaken de novo, my dear count. She gave it to you to return to me? Well, no matter, only I hope that in some way, on some day, she will come back again."

"I trust it, your majesty," said Count Frederick fervently; and the deluded monarch, pleased at the quick execution of his wishes, knew nothing of the deeper machinations of the keen brain which he fancied still was in his service.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Means to an End.

Kitty, left alone once more, found herself in better heart than she had been but now. At least, she had seen Roleau—had found once more proof of his faithfulness and his efficiency. Surely he would help her to escape yet again. And as for Sachio—better he, of whom she knew something, than a stranger of whom she knew nothing at all. Of late despair had been knocking at her heart in such fashion that the summons of opportunity found no hearing, but now she began to plan once more.

She sought to study the exits of the apartment in which she found herself. There were two doors, so it seemed, both fastened. She pushed strongly at one; it opened before her. She stood once more face to face with Count Sachio, the mocking conspirator who had of late had so much to do with her own misfortunes!

"Mademoiselle!" said he, "I am so pleased."

"For myself," rejoined Kitty indignantly, "I was never so much displeased as I am now. So the gentlemen of this country in this way show their quality—in their treatment of women? I compliment you."

"Your words are at least better than your absence, mademoiselle—I like neither."

"And what of me? What shall I say of a man who treats me as a criminal? Nay, a criminal would be treated better in my country—he would have a trial. There woud be process of law, observance of the law. Is the habeas corpus writ a thing unknown in this country—have the people never yet wrung that right from the hands of tyrants? In my country there are some recourses which any citizen may have."

"Your own country? Why did you ever leave it, mademoiselle?"

"The reasons concern me alone, sir."

"Indeed, you mistake—they do not concern you alone. We are many of us in this country also concerned with them. We would that you never had come from America. There are many reasons moving to that. And, indeed, we even ask your return to your own country."

"So, then, it was your message to me that I got? Most melodramatic of you, Count Sachio—but by what right do you demand my return?"

"There are some large rights, mademoiselle, which need small explanation."

"But which allow you to hinder me in the performance of my own duties—to ask me to be unfaithful to my employers? Why, you even ask me to deceive the public—to present a counterfeit—to pretend that I have done what I have not done."

"So? And you cannot take such good advice?"

"No, I will not. To deceive, to pretend, to counterfeit—those are attributes of your kingdom, not of my own country, America. In my country we have better standards—men and women alike—for which I heartily am glad."

"You have a stinging tongue, mademoiselle," said Count Sachio, red under his swarthy skin. "Perhaps it will grow milder if left unused. I shall leave you here—until you are willing to say you are done with Gretzhoffen and ready to return to your own country. This land, mademoiselle, can keep its own secrets—it could even close over the secret of the disappearance of a young woman—and leave her fate a mystery. I trust that you will reconcider what you have said." A moment and he had left her once more. Before he passed through the door she glanced beyond. The room was occupied, apparently, by his friends—escape on that side was impossible.

The other door still remained fastened. Kitty turned to it with burglarious intent—using an art learned when she was a schoolgirl. With no better instrument than a hairpin, she had seen wonders done at opening locks.

Her brisk interchange of compliments with Count Sachio had set her pulses stirring once more. She wanted to get out—she wanted to escape, and she proposed to escape. Once more free, she admitted to herself, she would be willing enough to take the advice which but now she had scorned—willing encugh to take ship back home, to see the familiar sky line of her own city, to find her own place back in the smoky and grimy city, her own place in the hum and grind of the old newspaper. How good it would seem to her now to see the faces of the local room. They might chaff her all they liked. Yes, she would go back home.

And now, with schoolgirl finesse in the employment of the small instrument at her disposal, she succeeded in her burglary. She felt the lock turn at last—felt it give—saw that she could open the door. She did open it—and closed it again.

Back of her she heard once more the creak of the other door as it opened. She turned—to encounter once more the figure of Count Sachio. He smiled at her as once more he entered unannounced

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Broken Coin

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by Grace Cunard

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SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

EIGHTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER XXIX.

King Cortislaw.

"So you find it convenient to enter my room once more unasked?" Kitty's eyes flashed in genuine indignation as she faced Count Sachio.

"It is not your room, mademoiselle, but ours. We pay for it and have control of it."

"So there was some definite purpose in secreting me here away from my friends?"

"Assuredly, a purpose very definite, and one from which we do not intend to be swerved, mademoiselle."

"What then do you purpose doing with me?"

"We plan taking you before the king—not the king of Gretzhoffen, but our own king, Cortislaw of Grahoffen. He wishes to see you, mademoiselle."

Kitty turned back into the room and Sachio, irritated at the delay, went so far as to take her by the arm to induce her to leave the room with him. She resisted him so vigorously that for the time he stood back nonplused.

But at length the girl's powers proved no match for those brought against her. She was forced from the room toward the front of the building.

Once more Kitty adopted the policy of Roleau himself—she ceased to struggle when she found struggling useless, and lay back to wait until a time when resistance might be more effective.

"Very well, then, gentlemen," said she. "Do as you like. I am weaker than yourselves. Since you are men and gentlemen, naturally you are strong."

Count Sachio made no answer to her biting words. In truth, matters had not gone so well with him as he would have liked. He had been ordered to report to his own king, and now must soon make that report, and certainly he could not tell of the unqualified success which he had so confidently hoped.

The insignificant distance which separated these two kingdoms was

Kitty Tries to Make Friends With the Old Keeper.

spanned in hours, somewhat to the wonderment of Kitty, schooled in the great distances of her own country.

Arrived in the capital of Grahoffen, she was allowed small time to arrange her toilet or compose herself after the fatigue of the journey. Very presently she was brought before King Cortislaw himself.

She found him an old man, thin, wrinkled, crabbed, irritable, excitable.

Cortislaw regarded the young girl steadily as she stood before him.

"So this is the woman?" he demanded of Count Sachio, who stood humbly by.

"The same, your majesty. She can explain what you desire to know."

The king looked intently at something he held in his hand. Kitty caught sight of it—it was the half coin which she had once possessed, which had been taken from her but lately by these men. Evidently Count Sachio had turned it over forthwith to its royal possessor.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "tell me what it says. The inscription is broken. I wish to know it all. I am informed that you have seen both halves of this coin, and therefore know the entire message. Read it to me at once."

Kitty took the coin in her hand as though to study it, but swiftly put her own hand behind her back as she clutched it.

"It is my property," said she stoutly. "Not even a king can take away property without course of law."

Even a king was astonished at the effrontery of the young girl—who held her possession until two sturdy guards forced the coin from her hand. The king smiled at her, a somewhat toothless smile.

"So you value it? Many do. We are willing to pay for what we have, mademoiselle—and the message of this coin we mean to have. Give it to us, and you shall be set free."

"Your majesty is liberal—you offer what is already mine—the right to liberty. But what you ask is impossible for me. True, I have seen each half of the coin—even I saw both halves at one time—but never have I read the entire inscription."

"But you have seen both halves," went on Cortislaw. "Tell me, what was on the other half."

"Your majesty, I cannot—I do not know."

"By the saints of our fathers," exclaimed Cortislaw, "if this were in the olden days the torture chamber should show you something. But now—"

"The torture could wring only deception from me, your majesty, and that deception would be of no service to you. I have told you the truth—and that alone can serve you. Give me my liberty again—and then perhaps I might learn more of the other half of the coin."

"The girl argues well," said Cortislaw. "I am not sure whether or not she speaks truth, but her argument goes to the same thing in either case. Let her go under guard—perhaps something may arise to give us further insight into this.

"As for you, Count Sachio, you have not yet suceeded in what was asked of you—you have not yet taught us where lies the hidden treasure of Gretzhoffen!"

"Your majesty," replied the count, reddening, "it is but inadvertence, which shall be amended. In my zeal I fancied your majesty would rather have this young woman than to have the other half of the coin. To secure that may require yet more time."

The king fixed on him the cold smile which his courtiers had learned to dread, yet he could not fail to see the shrewdness of Sachio's reply.

"At least guard her, then," said he dryly. "She shall be our guest until we learn more of what she knows. It means too much to forego the full reading of that coin these days. I mean to have it. I trust all my officers will realize that fact."

"Mademoiselle," said Sachio to Kitty, later, when she had been withdrawn to quarters which virtually were to prove a prison to her, "You have heard what the king has said—he will allow you to return to your own country unharmed if you but help him to the meaning of that inscription. What is it to you? It is only idle curiosity brings you hither. With us it may mean the life or death of our country."

Kitty gave herself up to certain reflections at the time. As to war between the two kingdoms, if it came, why should she aid Grahoffen against the country with which she had become more familiar? Neither had done her much courtesy, true, but for some strange reason her sympathies were not with the country governed by this irascible and unlovely king.

"Think well, mademoiselle," went on Sachio, "It is a long way from here to your country. The coin can mean but little to you at best."

"It may mean much to me," broke out Kitty suddenly. "Listen. This coin is not the property of your king or of that other king. It is the property of the people of these countries. It seeks to tell them its story—not to any king for his selfish purposes—but it seeks to make known its appeal for justice and liberty. What, think you the people will forever be content to remain a shuttlecock between you two?"

A moment later and he had left her once more to her own devices.

CHAPTER XXX.

King Michael of Gretzhoffen.

Meantime in Gretzhoffen town the people remained irresolute, uncertain, making no further overt attempt at the long-pending revolution. And as they waited their king amused himself after such fashions as had long been his own. Continually he changed, sometimes hoping, again dreading; and as often as he changed he sent for Count Frederick, on whom he leaned in fatuous confidence.

"But, my dear count," he reproached that gentleman one day, "you have left one errand uncompleted. You have brought us our coin back again, that is true, but the young lady who we fancied would come after it still remains absent from our court. There has been no word from her for many days."

"True, your majesty, she has disappeared, it seems. I do not, myself, know where she is."

"You have made inquiry at her usual place of residence—some hotel, was it not? An absurd thing, for such a woman as herself to live in a hotel."

"At her hotel," replied Count Frederick, "they know nothing. They tell me that she comes and goes at all hours, and leaves no word as to her return. Nearly two weeks ago she left, and has not yet returned."

"There may be many reasons," continued the count, "for her continued absence. Perhaps the business upon which she came is not yet completed. Perhaps her employers have called her away. Perhaps she may have been intimidated by certain obstacles in her way?"

"By whom, Count Frederick?"

"Well, she has seemed curious herself regarding the coin. Perhaps she knew somewhat of it—"

"So she also has studied this trinket that we gave her? Very well—we meant it to prove of interest."

"Doubtless. But regarding the coin so many threats have been made—"

"Threats? What threats? What do you know of any?"

"Many things come to my ears, your majesty, but I strive to keep them from your own ears so much as may be when I find them unwelcome."

"The most unwelcome thing that could come to us, my dear Frederick, is the absence of this young woman now. Where, think you, she may be?"

"I could not guess, unless perhaps she may have returned to her own country—in which case we shall never see her again, your majesty. We can make examination of the passenger lists of all sailings within the last two weeks. I will look into that. If she has not gone back to her own country, she either remains in this somewhere, or in some other near by."

"You do not mean Grahoffen?"

Count Frederick nodded. "That is what I do mean. In truth, your majesty, there are Grahoffen spies in this city—they were even at your ball. Perhaps they concern themselves with this young lady. Why not? If they suspect that she had part of the coin—and it was easily seen by any that once she did have that part—might they not undertake to make trouble for their own purposes with her?"

"But what good would come of that?"

Count Frederick saw that his argument had gone too far for his own purposes. He did not care to tell the king all he knew, yet his zeal for Kitty had led him far.

"Much good might come to Grahoffen's war department, your majesty, if they knew our secrets. Perhaps they thought she could give some information."

"But you do not predict trouble between us and our neighbor—you do not mean war?"

"Your majesty, I predict nothing these days, but always it is well to be prepared."

"You disturb me sorely—do not speak to me of war—I cannot endure the thought—I do not wish to hear of it."

As it chanced, much of this conversation came to the ear of one of Sachio's agents, the spy Bartel, still hanging about the city of Gretzhoffen. He overheard enough in his passing by at the time of this conversation to be advised that the king of Gretzhoffen intended to make search for the missing American. Not hesitating, he himself now sped off for his employer to communicate this news that he had learned.

He found Sachio aloof and discontented, out of favor in the court, and somewhat at a loss what next to do.

At the thought of a definite demand on the part of King Michael—or rather on the part of Count Frederick—upon their kingdom for the person of the young girl, Sachio grew somewhat grave. "This," said he, "is a matter for the king."

But the king was in no too good humor over all these failures.

"What, Sachio," said he, "you come to me once more with these old woman's tales? If your time is so short before your secret is discovered, then all the more reason for diligence on your part. It is not the business of kings to accept reasons for failure in performance. The girl is still available—complete your errand with her—bring to me the reading of the coin. I know well enough that if Count Frederick comes he will be different from his king."

Therefore once more Sachio went back to his bootless interviews with Kitty, once more pleading with her to give him all knowledge she had of the coin. And once more Kitty could no more than reassure him of her own ignorance of what he wished to know.

She heard odds and ends of information which taught her which way the wind sat at Grahoffen capital. Sometimes she heard Sachio, again Bartel, again this or that man, speaking freely of the plans at hand.

"I told the king," said Bartel one time, speaking to Count Sachio, "that all is ripe for the shaking of the tree. I told him that we have full plans of all their fortifications and defenses—that their resistance will be but nominal. Once we get the Gretzhoffen coffers opened, times will be easier in our country."

"Yes, once you do," rejoined Sachio grimly. "But tell us how!"

Kitty, really owing allegiance to neither of these kingdoms, both of which had done her such repeated injustice, hardly stopped to ask herself why she found her own leanings towards Gretzhoffen, the scene of most of the indignities she had met.

She must escape for every reason—so she assured herself. But how?

From the windows she had a full view of the well-kept grounds of the palace and of the boulevards surrounding it. She stood alone one day staring out on scenes grown familiar to her. But all at once her gaze grew more intent, fixed upon some object not far away. A car was standing at the curb. She did not remember to have seen it there regularly.

The two giant grenadiers to whom had been assigned the duty of watching after her in her wanderings regarded her as little more than a child, and they smiled as now she pushed past them through the door which led out to the gardens. She walked out to the car which stood at the curb, regarding it curiously, as though it were the first car she had ever seen in her life—something very far from true.

Kitty Escapes From the Palace.

What the guards, who smilingly regarded her through the windows, saw was a swift leap of the girl to the driver's seat, her rapid movements with the controlling levers as she cut on the spark, gave the car gas, threw in the clutch, threw open the throttle, and drove away, the cut-out muffler roaring her own defiance to pursuit.

Hue and cry now through all the halls of Grahoffen palace, and general uproar. Count Sachio, never too far away, was promptly on the spot. When he saw what had happened he cursed the two grenadiers with all his ardent soul. Even the king, himself, aroused from his midday slumbers, joined in these scenes of excitement.

"What has happened—what is all this about?" he demanded.

The trembling guards scarcely dared tell him the truth.

"What, she has escaped—that prisoner! She was of more importance than any held here in our own remembrance. You shall all be held to account for this. How now, Count Sachio, did we not give her into your immediate charge?"

"Your majesty, you did. I dare no explanation of her escape. Only—she is gone."

"And with her our only hope of success in the ambitions of this kingdom. You seek to explain that to me? After her, dullard, and bring her back in twenty-four hours—or else do not return. You guess my meaning, Sachio?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

Again in Gretzhoffen.

Pursuit? Kitty laughed at the thought as she felt under her the strong pulse of the great machine.

She had taken the driver's seat, and as the car was of left-hand drive, for the time she had no opportunity to look into the tonneau, had she liked. Listening to the swift purr of the smooth motor, she did not at first hear the sound of a chuckling laugh back of her in the car—a chuckle which at length broke out into a hearty gust of laughter.

She turned her eyes swiftly at risk of capsizing the car—and found herself gazing directly into the face of the man whom of all others she would most have preferred to see.

Even now he came crawling across the top of the seat to join her in the front of the car.

"Roleau!" she exclaimed, "Is it indeed you? Are you always to be the deus ex machina in all my difficulties—literally you are that now!"

"I do not know what you mean by that, excellency," said Roleau, as he took the steering wheel from her, "but I have been in this machine for some time. I was satisfied that did you escape from the palace you would need a means of getting away. All I needed to do was to wait patiently. So you have come. As soon as I could make my own escape I secured this car—a good one—and I followed. It was very simple, as you see."

"At least a near squeak this time, Roleau," said Kitty. "They never meant for me to escape."

"They do not mean it now, excellency," said Roleau, nodding behind him, where he knew pursuit even now was beginning. "I will drive now as I have never driven before. 'Tis a sweet engine, and it rides well. They will drive fast who follow us."

All of which was so literally true that before long the desert miles once more had sped beneath them and Kitty found herself again in the city she was more than ever disposed to call her home. They found entrance to the Ritz hotel at the rear door, in view of their own travel-stained condition.

"Excellency," said the grieved and pained clerk, when at length she made her way to the desk, "I was on the point of removing your belongings and making other arrangements for your apartments."

"By what right?" demanded Kitty. "They are paid for in advance—why should they not be ready for me when I come?"

"But we did not hear when you would return."

"There are many things one does not hear—perhaps you may hear very little of my own business and my plans. I pay for service here. Please care for me, therefore, and my man—we both are tired."

"You have been inquired for in your absence, excellency. The Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen—"

"Indeed, and what could he want?"

"He has been here twice, excellency, but yesterday he came the last time. He said he came on message of the king—which gave me warrant for what he asked."

"And what was that?"

"Access to your apartments. He said it was the command of the king."

"And you dared give him such access?"

"We dared not do less, excellency. He was most courteous in one way—asked many questions regarding yourself; but as to search of your apartments he made none, or next to none. He seemed to care for nothing that he saw, save one little picture, a portrait."

Kitty remained but briefly in her own rooms. She took a swift glance about. Everything seemed in place, much as she had left it—no search apparently had been made of any of the cabinets or drawers. There had been a little picture—one of herself—left on the dressing table. It was gone! She missed nothing else.

CHAPTER XXXII.

In the Name of the King.

It was plain enough to Count Sachio which way Kitty would head in her flight. Her car was little more than out of sight on the Gretzhoffen road, ere Sachio himself was in pursuit.

Count Sachio himself was no blunderer, and no common thief chaser, but a courtier and a man of intelligence. He knew it would be futile to make a direct demand of the hotel management regarding the whereabouts of the young American. Therefore, while he himself approached the hotel desk to engage the clerks in conversation, he sent two of his own men—one of them Bartel, the spy, who had been established here so long—by way of a rear stairway to find Kitty's room and report to him what they learned.

He stood for some time making polite speeches with the desk men and the porters, asking for certain information as to routes and distances, but all the time burning with impatience that he heard no report from his messengers. As he stood, there came news of them—startling news enough. There came shrieking down the stairs, incoherent, babbling, a maid who called out to the clerk, or to any who would hear her!

"A man," she cried—"A man—killed in her room—the young American's room—murdered—it is murder, I tell you!"

The officials of the hotel took prompt action.

"Close all the doors," ordered the porter. "Clear the corridors at once, in the king's name. Apprehend the murderer whoever it may be. Have the gendarmes come at once. You, boy—run I say."

It was hue and cry once more, and Sachio was glad enough that his own alibi was plain, for he knew not what now might happen. One of his men rejoined him—the spy Bartel. The other remained behind—his fate unknown as yet.

As for Kitty, she was at this moment once more away from her hotel and once more in the stately palace of Count Frederick.

She entered softly, leaving Roleau as usual somewhat remote, to guard against any sudden intrusion. Once more she cast about a searching gaze upon the details of the place. All its

Sachio Takes Advantage of Kitty's Helplessness, But Is Interrupted By a Guard.

disorder had been removed. Spick and span in military neatness the apartment lay before her.

Upon the dresser, in full view, openly displayed, was a picture in a little frame—a frame of silver set in brilliant gems. She looked at it suddenly—it was the portrait of herself which once had stood on her own dressing table in her hotel! Now it was here. Why? Kitty felt a strange flush come to her face.

Something now arrested her—she paused, reluctant to resume a search which ever had been distasteful to her. No, she would not touch a thing—had he not done as much for her—had he not been more respectful than herself of another's privacy? If he had taken anything from her apartments it was but—this. And apparently he had cherished it. No, she would not search for the coin. She would leave this country disappointed, if need be.

But there lay, just at the foot of the little portrait, an object which caught her eye. It was the half coin of Gretzhoffen!

Yes, here it was in full view, openly displayed, that any might see it who liked, who chanced to be there. Apparently Count Frederick felt that all pursuit of the coin had ended—that no longer could any intruder gain access to his palace.

Kitty hesitated for a moment. The appeal of the coin came to her once more. She took it up, held it in her hand, gazed at it—and once more, as so often had been the case—she found herself surprised at the very moment of her success.

She heard Count Frederick's quiet footsteps, his calm voice behind her.

"Mademoiselle, again!"

The count stood there regarding her.

"Evidently, mademoiselle, you did not realize that these repeated visits rendered necessary the installation of an electric system of my own devising—you see, I knew of your presence, and as you see, I have come. You rang. Of what service can I be, mademoiselle?"

"Leave me alone," panted Kitty, her face hot, tears almost in her eyes. "I hate you! I hate you!"

"I grieve at that, mademoiselle," said Count Frederick evenly. "I wish I could say the same of you—but I cannot. With every reason to distrust you—I cannot. Continually we cross swords, do we not? And you were easy to deceive this time. See—you are trapped as simply as a bird which steps into its cage without hesitation.

"Will you not give me back my coin, mademoiselle? Will you not add it to the other? Will you not assist me in reading the message of the coin, so that we may make an end of all this—so that we may not continually cross swords with one another?"

In answer Kitty darted past him, found her way into the hall, ran she knew not where. Before her lay a little narrow stairway, and she sprang up it, hoping to find egress somewhere. Alas! the door that closed the head of the stair was locked. She heard his low laugh as an iron grille snapped across the opening, cutting off escape.

"Won't you give it me now—my coin?" he asked.

Silence reigned in the great white marble palace of Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen.

And now, far off in other parts of the city, where men sought one who had done a crime, there rose in the streets the sound of hurrying feet, with the warning cry, "In the name of the king!"

(To Be Continued.)

The BROKEN COIN by EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

COPYRIGHT, 1915, BY WRIGHT A. PATTERSON

Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

NINTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Trap.

"Mademoiselle, give it to me! Let us end all this."

The voice of Count Frederick was agitated. For once he had met a situation sufficient to shake him from his calm.

Kitty Gray made no answer, as she shrank back, the coin tightly clasped in her hand. She cast on him a look so full of womanly anger as might have scorched him—an anger now devoid of fear. Caged, trapped, left without resource, helpless in the hands of her enemy, still she seemed deadlier than that enemy now.

"Will you not?" The man's voice had in it now something almost of pleading. Count Frederick felt something of shame at his own part in this.

"No!" she answered at length, her own voice low and even, panting out the words. "No, I will not. Come and take it from me if you dare. You have done that once, why not again?"

He turned away with a sudden gesture, his face red in chagrin over the justice of her taunt.

"You remember that?" said he. "What remains? Must I be yet more rude with you? It is not that I like the part, mademoiselle; be sure of that. It was not myself but my man who laid hands upon you that other time."

"He is still your man. You yourself still are willing to persecute a woman and a stranger. You are no better than he."

"Suppose I am not, then. Does it look as though you would gain much by defying me? Come, now. The coin is nothing to you; it is everything to me. I swear it is more than I thought it ever would be. It is life and death for me, and more than that, mademoiselle. Would you stand between me and an ambition such as that? I would repay you a hundredfold in any way you needed, if you would but listen to reason. But perhaps a woman does not know the word for reason."

"No, I do not. I remember only one word, and that is hate for you! When my chance comes I shall still remember that. In turn I will put you behind the bars if ever the opportunity comes to me. And you shall stay there always for all of me. I hate you!"

Count Frederick smiled grimly. "There is comfort in that word, mademoiselle," said he. "Rather that than leaden-eyed indifference, at least. But as for me, I do not hate you, neither am I indifferent toward you. I only—at least, mademoiselle, I try only to think of the coin and what it means to me."

"If it belonged to you, monsieur, it would have gone to you long ago. If you ever owned it you would own it now."

A sudden change came over the face of the nobleman as he caught the conviction in these words. They touched for him some consciousness long left unawakened.

"What do you mean?" he asked in a low voice. "What is it that you mean when you say that?"

"When Frederick, Count of Gretzhoffen, deserves this coin; when he earns it; when he gains title by virtue of right thoughts and deeds, then perhaps it will come to him; surely not before. This coin," she held it now out before her in her hand, "it will come eventually to that place where it belongs. It is seeking for that place now. The people really own it. They ask freedom and justice and liberty. And now you ask me why I cling to it; why it clings to me. I suppose it is because something impels me, compels me to do what I have done."

Count Frederick turned to compose himself to a situation of greater comfort. As he did so, and about to seat himself upon the lower stair, something fell from the pocket of his coat; something which he had brought with him from his room, in the hope that it had not been observed there by this woman. It fell now face upward on the stair between them, and he saw that she had seen it. He accepted the fact, and at first did not attempt to pick up the little picture, for it was the little picture which he had brought with him from his room.

"You saw, mademoiselle?" said he. "I had hoped that you would not."

"Yes, I see it now; I saw it there in your room," answered Kitty contemptuously. "You ask why I venture into your apartments now and then. Have I not the right? May I not claim my own property? I am not familiar with the laws of Gretzhoffen. Indeed, it seems to me there are no laws in this land. Not knowing how to replevin my property by process of law, what shall I do—wait and lose it, or take my own when I find it?"

Count Frederick smiled at this.

"You claim the coin also by that law?" said he. "Very well, I claim my picture by that law. Possession is nine points of the law of any land. Will you trade this for that?"

"No," spitefully.

"There is no bargain concluded," said he. "So then I suppose we will wait here until doomsday."

"Yes," viciously.

"Agreed, then, mademoiselle. With your permission, may I light a cigarette? Till doomsday! I would rather spend my time here than any place I know."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

New Problems.

Meantime the agencies of the law were in charge of another situation which but now had arisen in the destiny of the dynamic Gretzhoffen coin. There had been murder done but now over this coin. The city was exerting all its force usually employed in the preservation of life and property. Swiftly a cordon of troops and of the local gendarmerie had been summoned into action. The exits of the town were guarded. The gendarmes filled the streets nearby, some guarding the crossings, others converging toward the point of greater interest, whence the alarm had come—the Ritz hotel.

"What is this, monsieur?" demanded the officer, as he approached the desk, his quick eyes glancing over every detail about him. "Remain here, all of you. Let no one attempt escape. What is this, then?"

"We do not know, captain," began the clerk, who acted as spokesman. "This maid brings the alarm; she declares a man has been found killed in one of our apartments."

"What room was it, monsieur?"

"That belonging to a young American woman, a Miss Gray."

"Where is she?"

"I do not know, captain. She was here but now. We did not see her enter, but saw her leave. She and her man come and go often—somewhat mysteriously, I must admit."

"When was she here last?"

"Within the hour, I was about to say."

"And who was with her?"

"Her man, whom I have just mentioned. They came in, apparently from the country; apparently from travel. They came in at the rear entrance, so it seems. Soon after her arrival a gentleman inquired for her."

"And where is that gentleman?"

The clerk looked about him. Count Sachio by this time had approached the door, and would have been glad enough to pass out. Detained by the porter for a time, he now had met the gendarmes, who allowed no one to leave the place. The captain approached him.

"Monsieur, you must join us for a time," and led him toward the desk, where he resumed his questioning of the hotel force.

"Is this the gentleman?" he inquired of the clerk. The latter nodded.

"What did this gentleman say?"

"He asked me where was the charming young woman, the American. He said he had known her before."

"Has anyone else inquired for the young American lately? Has anyone else been in her apartments?"

The clerk considered for an instant. "One other, monsieur le capitaine, yes."

"Who—when was it?"

"A gentleman whose name I dislike to speak in public."

"Speak; it is the law."

"Very well, then, it was Monsieur le Counte Frederick of Gretzhoffen."

"The Count Frederick, when was he here?"

"Ah, that was before the return of the young woman from an absence of several days."

The officer turned to his men. "Those of you who remain," he said, "will guard all these whom we have questioned here. Prevent all from leaving the hotel. I must go to find the Count Frederick himself and bring him here. Perhaps through him we may find something of the whereabouts of the young woman herself. Once we find her we have found the solution of this crime."

"Who was the victim?" he demanded of the clerk.

"That we cannot say. This maid alone has seen."

CHAPTER XXXV.

Stone Walls Do Not a Prison Make.

Roleau, guardian of the fortunes of his mistress, had remained at that portion of the palace which seemed to him most useful as a coign of vantage in watching against intrusion. He had not been aware of the quiet advance of Count Frederick when the latter had been summoned by the electric bell set off by Kitty's presence in his own apartments. He knew nothing of the device by which the count had managed to trap the intruder; knew nothing of the cause of the long silence on the part of Kitty, whom he had left alone in the count's apartments.

As for the attendants of the palace itself, no alarm came from them. In truth, they all were in the front part of the building, grouped near the great windows or the street door, whither they had been called by certain alarms. They had seen hurrying troops, had heard the challenge of the officers of the law. That challenge came closer to them. A little group of men marching hurriedly, men in uniform, now ascended the great stairs. A loud rapping came at the doors of Count Frederick's palace. "Open, in the name of the king!" came the summons.

The servants, terrified, lacking the command of their master, not knowing where that master was, knew no alternative but to obey. The door was opened. The captain of gendarmes and his squad entered.

"The master of this place," he demanded of the men who met him. "Where is he? Is he at home?"

"We do not know," stammered the major domo, the first to speak.

Roleau caught some sense of what was coming on, saw the men approaching, and darted back to warn his mistress, whose long delay he could not understand. He hurried swiftly, on tip-toe, along the halls he knew so well, and naturally met no opposition. He reached the door of the room where he had left Kitty, glanced within, and found the room empty. He turned this way and that, not knowing what to do, and fearing to turn back toward the main stairway, passed deeper to the rear.

All at once he heard the voice of Kitty, loud and clear: "Roleau! Roleau! A moi! Vite! Vite!"

He hastened on down the hall, knowing that his mistress was once more in some desperate plight, and so found himself at length face to face at the foot of the staircase with the Count Frederick, who turned to meet him.

"Eh bien, Roleau?" smiled the latter. "What, again?" You are most faithful, shall I say most industrious, in the service of this lady? I would you had been so devoted in my own."

"As you please, master," replied Roleau, with aplomb. "But where is she?"

"She seems safe," said Count Frederick coolly, and waved a hand.

Roleau came front to front against the iron grille doors which barred egress for the inmate of the little prison. He shook at the bars in frenzy as he saw her. She approached him, her eyes wide with joy at his coming.

"So then, this was why!" cried Roleau. "Open this gate, I say." In his passion he forgot his own position and turned on his master, ordering him as though Count Frederick himself were the servant in this place.

"Roleau, you will yet exhaust my patience. This is my home. I have had almost enough of your running back and forth in it as you like. This is the last time. Out of here, you fellow."

"Is it so?" grinned Roleau savagely, his own mind upon the main situation of menace to his mistress. "There

Kitty Is Surprised in Frederick's Apartment by the King's Sweetheart and Then by Frederick.

are things which even matters quickly, master. But as for this, I won't argue now. It is your own safety demands it. Listen, the men are coming — the officers—don't you hear them?"

"Who are coming?"

"The gendarmes. There is a charge of murder. They are after you, they are coming to search this house. If they find you with her, trapped, what will they do? Open, master, quickly, I beg of you. It is for the sake of her and yourself."

"I do not run," said Count Frederick, slowly. "If there is such a charge as this, certainly we shall meet it, for it is our purpose as well as theirs to find who are guilty.

"Come now," he turned to Kitty as he drew the key of the lock from his pocket, "you have once more, by virtue of this exigency, mademoiselle, conquered me! I must set you free for a time. Fate seems to fight with you. Later we will resume our argument, but now I think what Roleau says has justice in it. We must not be found here thus."

He flung open the iron grille. Kitty

Frederick, Roleau and Kitty, Arrested for Murder.

sprang down the steps, clung to the arm of Roleau. A flush came to Count Frederick's face as he saw how she avoided himself. There was, however, no time for further speech. The sound of rapid footfalls came down the hall. The captain of gendarmes and his men were at the door.

"Messieurs, welcome!" said Count Frederick. "But why are you here?"

"Monsieur le comte, we ask pardon for the intrusion, but we must ask you to join us," replied the officer. He was impressed by the calm dignity of Count Frederick, as had been more than one man before his time.

"For what reason do you desire our company, monsieur captain? Is there any charge against us?"

"There is a charge of great severity to be laid against someone, monsieur le comte. We ask your aid to determine who that one may be. This young woman, who is she?"

"I am Miss Kitty Gray of America," answered the object of his suspicion. "This is my servant, Roleau. Who are you?"

"We are of the imperial police, mademoiselle. A murder has been done in your room at the Ritz hotel. Naturally someone is under suspicion. Let me caution both you and Count Frederick not to speak. What you say may be used as evidence."

Count Frederick turned suddenly toward Kitty, a warning in his eyes. She stood, therefore, silent, looking at the man.

"Mademoiselle is in no case responsible for any of this," said he to the officer. "We will all go with you and conclude this matter as quickly as possible. We must be released at once from detention."

The officer turned, beckoning to them to follow him.

The little group passed along the walk to the open curb of the street. It was Roleau who hesitated here, addressing the captain of gendarmes.

"Monsieur captain," said he, "I see that you guard all the escapes possible to any guilty man. You will therefore allow me to step to the corner to summon a carriage for these two excellencies?"

The captain of gendarmes hesitated for a half-instant, frowned, and then nodded.

"Naturally, you only do your duty, monsieur captain," suggested Roleau, "but excellencies like these must not walk. Excuse me, then?"

Those who lingered for an instant saw Roleau walk leisurely toward the corner, raise his hand as though in a signal, and then break into a run.

"Wait," exclaimed Count Frederick, as he saw the plan of the quick-witted servant. "If you leave us we also might run away. We will pick him up, no doubt. Do you tarry here with us."

In fact the captain of gendarmes, seeing his own party reduced by divisions to no more than a couple of men beside himself, hesitated, and turned to secure the safety of his more important captives. While they paused they heard the quick wheels of a taxicab which drew up before them. After all, it was an open question what had been Roleau's intent, for certainly he had ordered this vehicle to come hither. Making the best of the matter, the captain of gendarmes motioned for his prisoners to enter the car

Kitty turned to the silent man who sat at her side. Count Frederick laid a finger to his lips, counseling silence, and gazed straight on ahead.

Thus, silent and aloof, they arrived as prisoners at the grand entrance of the Hotel Ritz.

Kitty found herself face to face with a large man in full uniform, a man with a heavy beard and merciless eye, who now addressed himself to his subordinate:

"As to this man," he demanded, "why have you taken Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen?"

"Merely as ultimate suspicion," stammered the captain. "We found him in company with this young woman, in whose room the crime was committed. This other—" he pointed to Count Sachio, "also seems to have known this young woman."

"Who are you, then?" demanded the prefect of Count Sachio.

"I am Count Sachio of Grahaffen," replied the latter, none too happy at the situation in which he found himself.

"Might I suggest to monsieur le prefect that we hasten," interrupted Count Frederick gently enough.

The prefect had seen many women, not all of them innocent. He smiled grimly enough now as he noticed the beauty of the young girl, who stood pale and not wholly collected in all this turmoil. The girl now turned to him, and for the first time spoke.

"Monsieur le prefect," said she, "you cannot make guilt out of innocence. I can prove to you by this clerk and all these others that I was absent from the hotel for several days. When I came back it was but for a short time. I was absent when this crime was discovered. How can you connect me with it? Rather connect with it those who have had access to my room during my absence."

The official turned toward her thoughfully, then to the captain of gendarmes. "Have you searched all these persons?" he inquired. The latter shook his head.

"So you do not know what evidence has been destroyed. Come, then, perform that duty now, see what you find upon the persons of these individuals. The woman first."

Without hesitation Kitty presented her handbag, drew out from it her little portemonnaie, even turned inside out the pocket of her frock. Count Frederick watched her closely as she did so. He saw that none of the officers discovered the piece of coin. He suspected, although he did not know, that Kitty had palmed it under her thumb as she spread out her hands asking them to certify themselves.

The gendarmes, their captain, the prefect of police, turned away nonplussed. The prefect hesitated as he faced the calm dignity of the nobleman.

"Your excellency," said he at length. "I dislike to ask of you the right of search. I comply only with formalities. If your excellency—"

"Certainly," said Count Frederick and threw open his coat.

The prefect of police turned to his men. "We have not yet found all of those parties who may be concerned with this crime. We have not yet held our questions on the scene of the crime itself.

They turned, all of them, now, and approached the stairway which led to the floor upon which were located Kitty's apartments. Their number quite filled the hall as they advanced preceded and followed by gendarmes. But suddenly, as they approached the spot they sought, the captain of gendarmes touched the arm of his superior and pointed ahead.

"That is the man who escaped," exclaimed he. "Roleau, here he is and coming from the room itself! But who is that with him?"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The Body of the Crime.

It had been easy for Roleau, once he was free of the immediate presence of the officers, to spring into the nearest alleyway and quickly pass from sight. While the officer, in charge of his more distinguished prisoners, was passing in the car toward the front entrance of the Hotel Ritz, Roleau himself was speeding thither almost as quickly through devious passageways which led to the rear of the hotel.

Attaining entrance at the rear, he sped up the back stairs, and found himself once more at the apartments of Kitty Gray.

What he saw caused even his stout nerves to quail for the time. On the floor before him, with face half turned and arms outflung, lay the victim of the last adventure connected with the mysterious Gretzhoffen coin

Roleau did not know this man at first, but he seemed not of Gretzhoffen. Rather his garb betokened him to come from the kindred kingdom of Grahaffen.

Carefully, yet using that speed which he knew was imperative, Roleau bent over, making such search as he could of the silent evidence of the crime. It seemed to him almost certain that he had seen this man somewhere, but he could not be sure. He stooped, hesitated, and then swiftly sprang aside and sought concealment behind the hangings of the room. He was sure that he had heard someone move in the rear room of the apartments.

He had no more than concealed himself before he had full evidence of the justice of his suspicion. He heard a rustling behind the curtained door, heard the slight shuffling of a step, and saw emerge from the concealing curtains a face which he knew well enough; he could not mistake that cunning, ratlike chin, the shifting eyes, the almost silent footfall which carried him forward. Yes, Roleau knew him, knew him well enough. He had met him not so long before in combat at the lodge of Count Sachio, had saved the life of her excellency from this very man. He had fought him again in his own den in the slums of Gretzhoffen here. Yes, it was Blake, the renegade king of the apaches

He stooped over the body and knelt by its side, thrust a hand into the pockets of the coat, and at length drew out a folded paper, which he hurriedly crowded into his own pocket. Then he was about to arise, but at that instant he felt the tigerlike weight of the giant Roleau upon his own back. A hand caught his arm back of his, crowded it up toward the back of his neck, strained it into a position of excruciating pain. An arm came around his neck, choking him. He was helpless.

"Get up," said Roleau, at length, grimly. "I know you. So, you did this? Come along with me."

Now it was this strange apparition, of Roleau marching his prisoner before him, which gave pause to the procession of the law as it advanced toward the scene of the crime. The prefect of the city, his officers, Count Frederick, Count Sachio, Kitty Gray, all these others, paused now.

"What is that?" demanded the prefect imperatively. "Who are you, and what do you do with this man?"

"He is the guilty man, excellency," said Roleau stoutly. "I took him but just now in our apartments. He was bending over the dead man there when I saw him. I sprang upon him and took him, as you see. I know this man well enough. He is a robber and a chief of robbers; he is the leader of the apaches of this city."

"What you say may be true," said the prefect, as he cast a swift glance at the prisoner; "but we can jump at no conclusions. Retain him, retain them both."

"Do you know this man?" he demanded of the clerk.

But the latter shook his head. "I never saw him," said he. "But all these things rouse additional suspicion of this young woman. She is too mysterious; she has too many strange friends. I tell you, monsieur le prefect, she is the one who knows all about this! She knows the victim, whoever he may have been. Depend on that."

The prefect, had he made like question of Count Frederick or of Kitty herself, might have heard that they both had seen before now this latest addition to the list of captives. But that official, for the time, was engaged in larger matters.

"There is truth in what you say," he assented to the last remark of the

Count Frederick Detains Kitty While Roleau Demands Her Release.

clerk. "Now all the avenues are closed and all the suspects are assembled, I take it. We will see what the room itself holds. We will enter."

"No, no," cried Kitty, in sudden terror at the thought of what she feared to see. "I cannot. I know nothing of this; I don't know who the man was. I don't know who did this."

"What, mademoiselle! You fear to see what there may be to witness?" said the prefect. "As to you, monsieur le comte—"

"The law will take its course," said Count Frederick coldly. "You have before now seen fit to doubt me. Take matters into your own hands, monsieur le prefect, and let the law go on."

The prefect himself flung open the door and entered the mysterious room.

The room, so far as any victim of a crime was concerned, was entirely empty. Everything was in order as before. There was no dead man there.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Broken Coin

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by Grace Cunard

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

(Copyright, 1915, by Wright A. Patterson)

Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

TENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Missing Victim.

"What's all this?" repeated the prefect hotly, looking from one to the other of the group about him. "Would any of you make a mockery of the law?"

In turn the members of the unwilling and ill-assorted party gazed at him and at one another.

Kitty Gray alone seemed to bring to the situation a different point of view For just one instant she was of the belief that some hoax indeed had been committed here by her servant, perhaps in the interest of herself. But the heavy frown of the officer fixed upon her face sobered her quickly enough.

In turn she cast a glance upon Roleau and raised her brows in query, but that faithful soul only shook his head to signify his own ignorance of the nature of this new mystery.

"Which of you has undertaken this sorry jest?" demanded the prefect again. "Come, now, there was murder here. The town is afoot over it. And now we come here and are told there is no murder, or at least no victim of one! Where is the body? You said you saw the man lying here."

He spoke to Roleau.

"Your excellency, so he was," replied the latter. "He lay here on the floor—directly where you see this stain. This man here was bending over him when I caught him. He was searching for something on the body. It lay directly here when I left this room, Mousieur le Prefect. That is all I can say."

The prefect in anger turned to Blake, the apache leader. "What do you say?" he demanded.

"That I should be set free!" smiled the latter, showing his ragged teeth.

"You, woman—" the chief turned once more to the incoherent maid who stood wringing her hands—"what do you mean by coming with such an alarm, when there is no proof of need?"

"But I saw him lying there on the floor—there was blood—"

"But blood alone does not make a crime. There must be also the body of the crime itself. We must make further search. You will all remain in custody until we have looked further. You will all go with us to the Hotel de Ville for the further examination. We must find what bottom there is to all this."

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur le Prefect," here interrupted the deep voice of the Count Frederick. "You will do nothing of the kind so far as I am concerned, and so far as this young woman here is concerned."

The face of the prefect flushed in surprise. "How now, Monsieur le Comte? You speak somewhat boldly, it seems to me."

"There is no need for argument over it," resumed Count Frederick. "I was not here, as you well know, when this crime was alleged to be committed—your men found me elsewhere almost at the moment of the crime itself. My own people can tell you where I was all the day before that moment. Moreover, this young woman was not here, as I can testify—she was at my house. As to this man, whose name is Roleau, he was a servant at one time. I cannot say where he has been all the morning, but he was in my house, and apparently had been for some time when your men arrested us there—this young woman, myself and him."

"True, true," rejoined the official, "but all these things may come out at the examination."

"We are not bound to join you in this examination," rejoined Count Frederick coldly. "So far as this nobleman of our sister kingdom is concerned it is something of an indignity to hold him on any charge which perhaps may not be made good. Would you think it well for our government to be obliged to apologize to that of Grahoffen at this time?"

The prefect hesitated for an instant, pondering which horn of a possible dilemma would be safest for him. "At least I may call upon his majesty himself to declare his will," said he at length.

"Then lose no time," said Count Frederick sternly. "I fancy that his chamberlains, if you use my name, will carry any message to his majesty from us at once. We are to remain here safely—and you yourself may take up the question of the message to the palace. Tell his majesty that Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen and Miss Gray of America are held here, suspects, under so grave and so absurd a charge as that of murder. Say to him that we give our honor that we know nothing of it."

"But, monsieur, that picture—"

Count Frederick now flushed and frowned in sudden anger.

"True, the picture, I admit that I have it. I admit freely that I came to this room and took that picture without process of law—I make no denial of that in the presence of its late owner. It interested me—I took it—I will make such reparation as need be for that. But that has nothing to do with the crime of murder. You have not connected my name or hers with that. You shall not detain us under any trumped up, imaginary cause which may please you, eager to find some victim of the law."

Glancing from one to the other dubiously, the prefect at length turned to the door, making a sign to his subordinates.

"Hold these prisoners here," said he, "until I return. I will make such haste as I can—there shall a messenger go to the royal palace, and meantime I will see if I can save any more time by finding the king's servants by use of the telephone from the hotel rooms below."

Left presently alone, for a time the uncongenial party sat or stood about as best they might, moodily awaiting the issue of the chief's errand.

Kitty felt her eyes turning again and again to the grave face of Count Frederick himself, whose own glances were averted from her. How calm he seemed, how strong, how resourceful—these thoughts came to her mind. Without him now in this last desperate coil of circumstances regarding the Gretzhoffen coin, where would she be? What hope would she dare entertain?

Count Sachio paced about or sat, head in hand, brooding over the delicate nature of his own situation.

Of all those thus strangely gathered here only one seemed to feel anything but suspicion or despair!—the apache leader, who remained under guard in the hall, somewhat apart from the others.

A considerable time had elapsed, how long none of these might have said, when the air was split by a sudden shrill whistle which came from the hall beyond the door.

Blake, biding his time, appraising the proper instant, had given the signal of his tribe.

The result was confusion to all but him. It was as though the call of Rhoderick Dhu had been repeated, summoning armed men from every rock and bush about. For now, instantly, swiftly, it seemed as though

But Roleau Shook His Head.

every hiding place in these small apartments produced an armed man!

Without doubt the apache band had laid siege to Kitty Gray's apartments, and with no intent of failure.

The high voice of one of the apaches was first. "You, all of you, quick—I have no time to trifle with you. I want the coin—which of you has it?"

The apache's gaze turned from Count Sachio's face to that of Count Frederick, and then again from Kitty to Roleau. But none of these made answer. Not one made him sure as to any specific guess.

"What, you refuse—you do not have it—all of you? I know as I stand here the coin is in this room at this moment—some one of you has it—it is worth your life not to own up to that."

Kitty's eyes despairingly sought those of Roleau, but the fighting face of that belligerent showed no sign of war. Count Frederick looked at her, anxiety upon his face, but made no sign which could catch her attention. He was not indeed entirely sure that she had the coin in her possession.

"Search them all, men," came the quick order of the rat-faced apache, who was now in charge of this situation. "We must hurry. Be careful now."

The men who had covered the prisoners with their weapons now sent forward some of their number to carry out these orders. As they advanced Roleau sprang toward them, but was held back by the hand of the captain of gendarmes.

"Quiet!" said the latter. "Would you have some of us killed? This man wants only a bit of coin. In the name of heaven, to give that is cheaper than to get killed!"

Roleau fell back, and the work of the searchers went on. But it was not money that the apaches sought. They took little count of the contents of the pockets which they ransacked.

They turned at last to Kitty, and the swift flush on her face kindled their eyes with a suspicion of some guilty knowledge on her part. She had not had time since palming the piece of coin at the time of the original search to conceal it elsewhere than in her handbag. It was a foregone conclusion that it would be found there. The thieves gave exultant exclamations when at length they saw the fruit of their efforts—the piece of broken coin. The man who searched Kitty's bag held it up, grinning.

Before any had time to form a plan there came a sudden cry from one or more of the apaches. An instant later and all of them were gone—passing out the open window to the fire escape which led to the street below.

"By the Lord!" exclaimed Sachio, the first to speak. "That was sudden work." He turned to Count Frederick, a certain anxiety in his own gaze, for he might well fancy that the latter held him in no too safe a position of friendship, since his own late ransacking of the count's palace here in Gretzhoffen town.

"Who were they, think you?" inquired Sachio.

"Who?" replied Count Frederick. "They are thieves of our beloved city of Gretzhoffen—a part of organized society as it exists here, my friend, and well organized, as is easy to be seen. Blake, yonder, is their leader. His home is in the edge of this city, and his hand is ready enough, me thinks, for any crime. Fifty, a hundred men or more are under his orders. Apparently he has laid his plans well. I thought as much when I last saw him and his rats."

"And when was that, Monsieur le Comte?"

"At no long time ago I paid him a visit," said Count Frederick, shrugging. "I learned enough to be ready to suspect that man yonder or any of his tribe. They have broken and entered these apartments. Within our view they have committed robbery from the person of this young woman here. They have obviously taken what they sought—whatever that may be. I trust it was of no consequence, mademoiselle?"

Kitty took her cue from the calm speech of the count, her late rival, but now rather her friend than this other nobleman of Grahoffen.

She only in turn shrugged her own shoulders and turned a somewhat reproachful gaze upon the officers of the law, who stood about, helpless and chagrined.

Count Frederick smiled. "This," said he, "is somewhat of a jest. It seems to me that our friends the gendarmes submitted somewhat easily. At least they have gone—they have taken what they liked, and they have carried off their dead from the field—if there have been dead here. Have you any notion beyond this, my dear Sachio?"

But Count Sachio, thus smilingly adjured, could add nothing to the fund of information. He himself was left alone. If his own man had been the victim, so much the worse for the man himself. But these reflections caused him no satisfaction.

"We must be out of this now," he exclaimed angrily, and strode toward the door. He flung it open, almost in the face of the prefect, who was hurrying back to his demoralized associates in the administration of the law.

The face of the prefect himself was red with chagrin as he now strode in at the open door.

"Gentlemen," said he, facing Count Frederick, "I have indeed received a message from the king. It is entirely in your favor."

"His majesty says, of course—" began Count Sachio.

The prefect frowned, and turned again to Count Frederick. "His majesty says Count Frederick and the young woman are to be set free at once. They are to go where they like, in full possession of their liberty.

"As for this nobleman"—and he turned to Count Sachio at last. "I am instructed to set him free also, and to ask him not to add further complicating circumstances by too long a tarrying on this scene."

"But tell me—why do you stand here gazing thus?" he demanded of his men. So then they were obliged to tell him of what had transpired during his brief absence.

"Escaped—you allowed them to come here and rob you in broad daylight—to add yet another crime to that which has been committed here—and then you my men, allow them to escape even from that, and without pursuit? Surely this day the law is humbled and abased in our sight. Monsieur le Comte, you will pardon me if I say that I had rather return to my office now than to linger here."

"But someone killed that man," broke out the hysterical maid, who all this time had been lingering about.

"Yes," said the prefect gravely,

They Too Were on the Train.

that is true. There was a victim here—and yonder lies proof enough of that. Someone must have killed him. Someone must know about that. Detail two men." He motioned to Roleau and the renegade, who still had been retained in custody in the hall, by guards who had not dared to enter the room.

Now for the first time Kitty Gray rose above her fears, excited at this sudden danger to her faithful servant.

"What do you mean?" demanded she of the prefect. "This is my servant Roleau. He is innocent as a babe. He has been with me all the day, every moment of the day since I left my room. We were together when we were taken in charge. He even brought to you the man who was in this room. Why do you accuse him?"

"Enough," said the prefect at length, and signed to his men. "The man Roleau and this other with him will remain in charge. You others may go free. Messieurs, mademoiselle, shall I say adieu or au revoir?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Hidden Thief.

As he turned from the room where these late exciting scenes had occurred, there was one—Count Frederick—who gazed back with a look of inquiry to the solitary occupant who tarried there. Kitty Gray, wrapped in her own anxieties, did not catch this look of solitude, but as they all passed out and left her to her own devices, robbed now even of the aid of her faithful servant, she cast herself upon a couch in sudden access of apprehension.

Then she paused, her breath held, her heart stifling her lungs for just an instant. It seemed to her that she felt in the couch beneath her some suspicious movement—yes, it must be so! She sprang across the room to the door, her first instinct that of flight, but halted and found concealment beyond the first curtain of the alcove. Her eyes were fastened on the cover of the couch which but now she had occupied.

Yes, she saw the lid move, saw a hand appear beneath its edge—saw a man slowly crowd himself out from this hiding place within the body of the couch! It was the face of one of the apache band—a face that she saw turned questioningly into the room, which evidently he thought now vacant. Surely Blake had abundant retainly he himself did not tarry. A moment, and he was out of the window and passed from sight as had his fellows.

There was no time for Kitty to call for aid, even had there been aid which she could have summoned. She wasted no time in futilities, but her own fashion of self-help, resolved to lose no opportunity to end certain of these complexities. Without time for thought she sprang after the man, no definite plan in her mind. As she did so, she called out once more, almost by instinct, upon the one friend who thus far had not failed her. "Roleau!" she cried,—"Roleau!"

But the faithful Roleau did not hear his mistress summon him. By this time he was in the front part of the hotel, himself in charge of the officers of the law.

On his way to the station house in charge of the gendarmes he weighed deliberately the chances of success one bold man might have against these others now torn by indecision; for certainty the gendarmes themselves had come out of this with none too much glory, and were in no too good conceit of themselves. They walked loosely, heads down, dreading what lay ahead. It was no great feat for Roleau, half guarded, to spring away from them at speed, and once more to gain the front of the hotel. He passed rapidly to the desk.

"Padron," he said to the clerk who stood there, himself irresolute, "the captain has asked me to inquire of her excellency—" and he did not step to specify as to the nature of that inquiry. He sprang to the stair, undeterred, ran down the hall, and once more found open the door of the room which but now he had left.

He entered eagerly, gazed about him—and stood dumfounded for a moment. There was no trace of his mistress. The room once more was altogether empty.

To him there was only one conclusion possible. Certainly his mistress had not come out by the front hall, therefore she must have passed out by yonder window, which had offered exit to the intruders. The next moment Roleau himself was through the same window and hurrying down the fire escape which he saw now gave access to the street. By the time the captain of the guard and his hurrying men were close on his track at the hotel desk, Roleau once more was free.

The scene of action of all this was now but transferred from the rear to the front of the hotel, where, not apprehending the presence of others, the parties of this drama met without plan. Count Frederick had halted, reluctant to leave the young girl in such a time of distress. Count Sachio, looking about him for some sign of the man who he knew had the coin he coveted, also stood irresolute at the curb. Kitty, pursuing the flying thief—and after her now Roleau—paused as they saw others ahead. It seemed to Roleau when he first caught sight of the excellency whom he served that she was waiting for someone, holding back for some purpose of her own.

The flying apache passed close to Count Sachio. He halted at some quick word, some sudden sign which the nobleman gave to him. Roleau saw them converse for just a moment—saw Sachio pass money to the flying thief, and then motion him to speed on his way. Roleau saw Sachio look at his hand, hurriedly clasp it shut, and thrust it into his pocket—saw him in turn beckon to his own man, Bartel, his late agent in certain of these affairs.

This could indicate but one thing. Sachio had obtained possession of the coin, had transferred it to his messenger! And now they saw that messenger hasten to the nearest motor car standing at the curb.

Another car stood, as yet unoccupied, and toward this now started three persons—Count Frederick, Kitty Gray, and Roleau, the idea of pursuit being foremost in the mind of each of these three. But Kitty Gray, rejoiced at finding her servant once more at her side—for now Roleau had hastened forward—was of no mind to take any other ally into her own plans. Even as the agent of Count Sachio sprang into the car, they rushed swiftly to that approached by Count Frederick, and with more force than politeness pushed that gentleman aside, sprang in, and made such argument to the driver of the car that he was off at speed within the next moment.

"Quick, Roleau!" called Kitty Gray. "Make him drive—that man is Bartel, the partner of Count Sachio. He is bound for the train—he has the coin, I am sure, and he means to take it to the kingdom of Grahoffen. Once there, it is lost to us. Quick, he must not beat us to the train!"

So rapidly had these events occurred that she scarcely had time for thought.

"In two hours, or three at most—if that man catches the train—the coin will be in Cortislaw's hands, and out of our reach forever. Drive, Roleau—make him drive!"

Therefore, what Count Frederick, left alone in the street, was forced to see was the spectacle of those two hurrying vehicles leaving him to his own devices. He looked about him hurriedly for some means of locomotion of his own, and his gaze fell upon a horse standing at the curb. In default of better means, he sprang to the saddle, and himself was off in such pursuit as he could compass.

Bartel, the Gretzhoffen agent, was in no mood to delay. He urged his own car hard, and hastened toward the station of the little railway which, as Kitty and Roleau both knew, led to Grahoffen around the northern extremity of the neutral strip, close in under the shoulders of the little mountains.

There stood in the station now, attached to the fuming engine, a mixed train, partly mode of coaches, partly of flats, apparently ready to depart. Bartel approached the guard rapidly. What he said no one heard, but an instant later the guard had received from Bartel a telegram, had transferred it to the station agent, and himself was blowing the signal for the starting of the train—perhaps some minutes before the regular schedule time. Ah well, what might not one do for these of the nobility!

The motor which bore Kitty and Roleau whirled into the station an instant too late, or so it seemed. The race seemed lost, and recovery of it beyond hope.

"Quick, Roleau, close to the tracks!" commanded Kitty Gray. "Drive, drive—they are not out of the switch yards yet."

With Roleau's revolver muzzle at his back, the driver obeyed his orders. Neck and neck he raced the passing train, drew alongside just close enough for one desperate leap. His passengers took it. An instant later he was alone. They two were on the train!

As for Count Frederick, he pounded along hopelessly distanced in this race. He saw what had occurred, but could do no more than accept the facts as they were.

But Count Frederick himself was no irresolute soul, and moreover he knew his country well enough. He did not pull up now, but rode off through the town, across the country, taking the arc of the great semicircle which he knew the train must make where the line curved around the northern extremity of the uncultivated plains.

On the train Bartel, the king's coin in his own possession, sat well enough content with the turn of his fortunes. He knew that a few hours now would place him in safety—and knew that more than safety would await his arrival in Grahoffen with the coin. Perhaps Cortislaw would reward him in measure even beyond that awarded to his superior, Count Sachio. Surely there would be promotion for him, pay of material sort.

He had not seen the desperate means employed by Kitty and Roleau to board the same train—did not know that even as he sat comfortably smoking and complacently looking forward to the future, these two pursuers were but a coach or so in the rear, making plans of their own.

"Remain, excellency," said Roleau at length. "Let me go forward alone—he may be hard to handle, for surely he will not give up what he has except with stiff resistance."

"I shall go also," said Kitty stoutly. "I must see how it goes on—no one can tell what next may happen to the coin—I must be there to see it all. Nevertheless, I thank you for your chivalry, Roleau—you bring to mind the men of my own country."

A flush of pleasure came to the face of the honest fellow at words of praise whose like he had never heard in all his life.

"Come, then," said he, "at least there is no chance for him to escape from us."

"But, excellency," he added as they passed the window in the next car forward, "look! What is that?"

She followed his gesture, and looked out across the rugged landscape in which they now found themselves. Ahead, coming at reckless

They All Passed Out and Left Her to Her Own Devices.

speed down the face of the steep grade, rode a man whose going was fast and furious. He rode a horse spent almost to his limit, but rode so recklessly as showed disregard of his own life and that of his mount as well.

"He is going to be killed!" cried Kitty. "Look, it is the Count Frederick—how has he come here?"

Roleau suppressed an exclamation. "By the short road across the bend—how did he happen to think of it? But he is helpless!"

And so it seemed—the rider, who did not draw rein, but spurred furiously on down the slope—seemed riding to his death.

But once more courage proved its own best defense. The rider came head on toward the train, paused on the cut just above it—spurred forward recklessly, and pulling his staggering horse together leaped boldly out and forward—those who looked through the window could not tell with what result.

"Now," said Roleau, "we have a dead man for sure. Dead or alive, there are two men on the train with whom we must account. There will be work for us, excellency, that is sure."

Kitty Grey turned a pale face toward him. "He took his chance like a man," said she. "I hope—oh I hope—"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE BROKEN COIN

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

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Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

ELEVENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Virtue of Necessity.

"He is killed!" cried Kitty Gray, as she stood, still uncertain as to the result of Count Frederick's desperate leap toward the moving train. "I cannot look!"

But presently she did look—both she and Roleau passing not forward on the train but to the rear of the car which they occupied. Amazed, they saw Count Frederick struggling to his feet.

"Now, Roleau," she cried, "we must be quick! If the count has taken this desperate chance it was for some desperate purpose back of it. He knows about the coin—we must get it before he does, and that means at once."

"How shall that be done, excellency?" said Roleau, puzzled for just a moment.

"I have it!" said Kitty, as they hurried deeper into the car that they might not be seen by Count Frederick. "Wait. I will send a message to him—we will ask him to walk into our parlor."

She seated herself for a moment and hastily wrote a few lines on a page of her note book, smiling as she did so.

"Tiens!" she laughed. "I am now a leader in Grahoffen diplomacy. Does not my writing seem formal?"

"We send it forward by the guard?"

"Yes, Roleau, get him quick—give him this money—we will wait here in the drawing room near to the front door of our car. The guard must not tell him who we are."

But even as they waited, intent on the success of this somewhat transparent ruse, Kitty heard the step of the guard behind her, and turned. Yes, Bartel of Grahoffen was with him, a puzzled expression on his face, the note still in his hand.

"It was this lady sent me, monsieur," explained the guard, and, witnessing the stiff surprise of all concerned, was willing enough to step aside and leave explanation to others.

"Indeed," said Bartel—and himself would have been equally glad to escape, for there was no one in the world whom he less expected or less desired to see than this young American who now faced him smiling.

"You here?—How can it be possible, mademoiselle?" said he. "Did you fall from the sky?"

As he spoke any shrewd pickpocket would have known in which pocket he had concealed the coin; for unconsciously his hand dropped over it.

"Others also!" smiled Kitty Gray, and pointed through the rear window of the car to the flat on which Count Frederick stood. He even now was turning to pass forward into the train.

An exclamation passed from Bartel's lips. "Heaven protect us," said he, "the thing is bewitched!"

He turned and disappeared once more in the forward part of the train. For a moment Kitty thought of following him, but concluded that he would make no attempt to conceal the coin. Since he was so nearly at his destination he would continue to keep it on his person. Therefore she turned to the rear of the car.

"Monsieur le Comte Frederick!" she exclaimed now, greeting the tall figure which approached her. "You come unannounced."

Count Frederick gazed at her for a moment in somewhat open admiration. "Listen," said he at length. "Why should we make any three-cornered fight of this at a moment such as this, when so much is at stake? Why should we not unite against yonder man, a common enemy, who has what we both desire? Beyond belief we are lucky that we are both here alive. Yonder man has the coin—I know that as well as you do. In half an hour he will be free. Once in Grahoffen with the coin, he may wave farewell to us and all our hopes. Come, mademoiselle, shall we be enemies or allies? You are wise enough to see what I mean."

"Yes! And I suppose you to be sportsman enough to play fair with us at least. You have not always done so."

"That," said Count Frederick slowly, the red blood mantling his dark skin, "is the bitterest cut I have known in all my life. I have asked your forgiveness before now—have told you it was my man alone who offered you violence—not I. On the contrary, I have admired your own courage and resourcefulness all the way through. It seems to me you well have evened any offense I ever gave to you."

"At least," said she, "one good turn deserves another, and we have little time to talk. Well, then, will you continue to fight fair if I join you as ally against Grahoffen in this case?"

"It is agreed," said Count Frederick, "yes! And let fortune later determine between us as to which of us ultimately shall own the coin. Where is he?"

"He passed forward but now," said Kitty.

They turned once more to seek the guard. Once more he led them forward. This time they all took concealment back of a door which Bartel must pass as he left the train.

Nervous, eager to be off the train and into safety as soon as might be, Bartel was early in hurrying his luggage to the door, and himself followed it even before the train was coming to its stop at Grahoffen town. He passed by the place of concealment of the three conspirators, and hearing some slight sound turned to see the face of Count Frederick staring straight at him—to feel at the same time the iron arm of Roleau cast about his neck. The sinewy fingers of Count Frederick supplemented the assault of his man, and between these two Bartel was helpless. He felt a hand rifling his pockets, but as for himself could make no outcry. Just as the train slowed up at the entrance into the yards, they flung him to the floor, where he lay limp.

"I have it," cried Count Frederick, and held up the Gretzhoffen half coin before Kitty's eyes. He placed it then in his own pocket.

"Why not give it to Roleau as an impartial third party?" asked Kitty demurely.

Count Frederick caught the challenge and responded to it.

"Very well," said he. "Roleau himself shall be the lord high keeper of the coin until further orders. But look yonder."

As he handed Roleau the coin, he nodded now to the window, behind which could be seen the ranked soldiery of Grahoffen, filling the space of the station platform. Apparently they had been summoned to receive the agent of the king.

They passed back swiftly to the rear of the train, and as it came to a stop all three of them dropped off on the farther side. While the officials and the soldiery were searching the train the fugitives were making their way off to the mountain side where there seemed at least some slight chance of escape from discovery.

CHAPTER XL.

The Escape.

The grind of the wheels under the brakes had hardly ceased when a high official of the court of Grahoffen sprang aboard the train, looking this way and that expectantly, peering through the windows and doors of coach after coach. But he did not find the man he sought. Hurrying through the last car of the train, at last he half-stumbled over the limp form of Bartel lying on the floor where Roleau's arm had flung him, neck and crop.

"Quick here!" he called out. "Here's murder—but by whom? Where have they got to? After them, men!"

But now some sort of answer to their questioning came in a shout from the station platform. Someone was pointing beyond the train up the mountainside. The official sprang forward.

"After them, men! They must have done this," cried he. "They have what we seek."

A band of mounted men an instant later rode out of the station in full pursuit of the fugitives. They raced down the road, toward a bridge which spanned the stream ahead.

"Look yonder, excellency!" exclaimed Roleau at length, as he turned and faced down the slope to gaze at these pursuers. "They will cut us off on ahead. Look—they are riding for the bridge."

He looked this way and that, as the three paused uncertain. At last his eyes fell upon a vast bowlder that lay near by the edge of the ridge upon which they stood. He cast a swift glance below, lining up the course of the bowlder straight down to the bridge below. Bracing himself, he threw his shoulders against the bowlder, exercising every ounce of his own prodigious strength.

The advancing soldiery heard the roar of the coming stone, saw how imminent was the danger from it, but some of the riders were already at the bridge itself as it struck. It crashed through the timbers as if they had been straw. What had been the bridge was a ruin. Horses, riders—all were carried down into the stream below.

"Come, now," cried Kitty's companion to her once more as they saw the pursuit arrested. "On ahead there may be a better place—we may yet get through if we hasten."

At length, well-nigh spent, they flung themselves down in this place of greater security. Far below they could see mounted men still coming.

Count Frederick and Roleau made such silent answer as they could. Each drew his weapon and prepared it for what might next ensue.

"We can hold them for a little time," said Count Frederick, judicially.

"But we must not lose—our cause is too good to be lost!" exclaimed Kitty. "I will not yield to fate—I will not give up! If I myself could escape perhaps I could get to Gretzhoffen at last and bring back help for you, if you could wait long enough."

"It is a good plan," said Count Frederick, suddenly. "There is danger in it, but not so much for you as for either of us. You are good on your feet, mademoiselle — what shall I say—?"

But Kitty had made her own resolve. Roleau extended his hand to her. She took the coin into her possession, unseen by Frederick. A moment later she was speeding away, crouching, attempting to cut in ahead of the mounted men below.

CHAPTER XLI.

King Michael to the Rescue.

In Gretzhoffen capital matters had gone ill enough this day. The populace was on edge with excitement over the mysterious murder.

The prefect of police was furious over the results of the day's work. He knew that for some time he had been under the king's suspicion for laxness in the administration of his office and felt that it was time to make some example, to produce some proof of his own vigilance.

"You, Anselm, you Du Brock," he ordered two of his most trusted men—"go out—find these people—we must have them in our own hands. Turn night into day and day into night until you have them once more. The girl is with them—be sure of that—find her and you will find Roleau, the answer to all these riddles."

These members of his staff, thus adjured, made their way out, none too happy at the task assigned them, for they knew well enough that now they were to cope with active brains and active bodies. Learning that the escape of the accused had been made by the railway train, for a time they hung about the station in search of further news. They spent some hours there—

A Band of Mounted Men an Instant Later Rode Out in Full Pursuit.

but departed just too soon to welcome the return of one of the fugitives they sought—none less than Kitty Gray herself!

Safe from immediate pursuit, Kitty paused for a little rest and a little food. What should she do? For a time she was undecided, but presently her resolution was made.

"I will try it," said she to herself. "I will go to the palace direct. I will see if I can get access to the king!"

And thither, forsooth, she did turn her way.

Rank by rank of the guard she passed by this way or that, wheedling them, threatening them, bribing them, until she found herself within the doors of the palace.

"Mademoiselle, again!" exclaimed King Michael. "Welcome, then." His mottled face did indeed express gratification at seeing her once more.

Kitty first made apology for her disordered apparel. "I ask your majesty's pardon," said she, "for my plight. I am sure of my welcome only because of the news I bring—I am from the front—the war!"

"The front—the war—mademoiselle, what do you mean? What war? We are not at war!" But even as he spoke the blood shrank back from his face.

"There is war, your majesty, if I may say it," rejoined the young girl. "Yonder at the edge of the neutral lands, this side of Grahoffen, men are fighting. Their army is out—they have besieged our people."

"Our people?—Who are our people?"

"Two only—one a friend of your majesty—another of my own."

"Meaning?"

"None less than Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen is there besieged at a little pass in the mountains. With him is Roleau, my servant, whom you do not know. Horsemen were all about them when I left. They were holding the little pass as best they could."

"But what caused all this—why were they besieged?"

"Your majesty, it is because they want what belongs here in Gretzhoffen—they covet the Gretzhoffen coin."

"The coin? What coin? Impossible! I have it myself—at least a half of it, mademoiselle."

"You—your majesty—how can that be? For see, I myself have it—I fled with it to get safety for it."

King Michael's wits were not quick enough to meet this sudden demand upon them.

"It travels, that coin—I would not believe that you could have it. So now they think he has it and have coveted it? Shall yonder ruffian Cortislaw take from us that which is ours? No, mademoiselle, you are right! You are a faithful messenger to bring us this news. Listen, I myself will go to the rescue!"

"Your majesty speaks as a king," said Kitty Gray.

Pompously, the less rapid for his avoirdupois, King Michael turned now to the halls.

"Call out the guard!" he commanded. "Sound the bugles now and bring me my officers here. Quick, equip me, you men—we must ride—the troops must form."

The word passed quickly. Within the half hour iron hoofs rang on the pavements of Gretzhoffen avenue as the guard, their sovereign at their head, rode out at speed.

Left in the care of one of the household women, Kitty was shown to a room of her own, where she might the better arrange her apparel and dispose herself for rest. She did not know anything of Sachio's presence in the palace—indeed, Michael himself had not been aware of that; but that crafty individual, readily enough learning what was meant by all this excitement, himself sped away from the palace even before the guard was out.

On the mountain side where they had been left, Count Frederick and Roleau, once master and man, now partners elbow to elbow in a common cause, lay and looked down.

As they looked they saw the advance of the troops below them halted. Why was this?

"Surely," chuckled Roleau unconcerned, "we have beaten their whole army, the two of us! Are they no braver than that, these men of Grahoffen!"

"Something has happened below there," rejoined Count Frederick. "We could not hold out against their forces, and it is not fear that has halted them.

They turned in the other directing, gazing across the edge of the plain along the upper Gretzhoffen roadway. A cloud of dust was advancing swiftly. "Who goes there, master?" said Roleau. "Are they men of this kingdom or of our own?"

The eyes of Count Frederick kindled at the sight. "By the Lord!" said he, "the girl has won! Now they are coming—it is police duty for neither of these, but army against army! Will it be war, or peace?"

In the event, it proved to be peace. The counsel of Count Sachio prevailed. Cortislaw's inborn prudence held back his hand even now, angered as he was at this failure to secure possession of the coveted coin on which he counted so surely to mend his own waning fortunes. He sent forward a band of trumpeters with a white flag for a parley. They met the advancing forces of King Michael. There were explanations, apologies. Within an hour after the dust cloud first had been discovered, Count Frederick was shaking the hand of his own monarch and making such explanations as he might of this scene of turbulence.

"There were two of us only, your majesty," said he, laughing, and pointing up the mountain side to the steep ridge they had left. "Two, beside the young woman."

"Yes, yes—she came—she brought the news. You owe your safety to her, as usual."

The pourparler at length ended, the two bodies of armed men saluted, each dipping its banner to the other. And so, with much sounding of trumpets, each turned back in its own direction. The leaders of each army turned back as well to problems of their own. The coin was now in Gretzhoffen—or half of it at least. Precisely as much could be said for Grahoffen. The old king, Cortislaw, was shaking in his wrath and humiliation that he had but half the coin.

King Cortislaw Counts His Dead.

CHAPTER XLII.

The Torture Chamber.

As for the young American herself, she had remained these hours alone in the palace of the king.

The palace, as she now reflected, was more nearly deserted than ever she had seen it. The household staff seemed disorganized. Fright had caught hold of all. The most conflicting rumors went this way and that.

"I wonder," said Kitty Gray to herself after a time, as she sat alone—"I wonder!"

Now, what she wondered had to do with certain questions which she long had had in her own mind.

"'Cruciati cam'—did 'cam' mean 'camera'—'chamber' — torture chamber?'"

If so, where was that torture chamber? Was it under the battlements yonder, or here in the palace itself? Where had the old king concealed his wealth?

She rang the bell and summoned once more the woman of the palace who thus far had cared for her at the king's behest.

"Margot," said she, "talk to me. I have traveled far and am weary. I am distressed—nervous perhaps. Talk to me."

"We are all distressed, excellency," said the woman. "We know not what there may be yonder. Perhaps this moment the two kingdoms may be at war. But what can I do to make your excellency more comfortable?"

She was willing enough to curry favor with a favorite of the king.

"Tell me Margot," demanded Kitty Gray, "about this country here. I am a stranger from a far country, and I know very little of this land and of its customs. Is it an old land, this of Gretzhoffen, Margot?"

"More immemorially old, your excellency, than most people have ever dreamed of. The first kings of Gretzhoffen date back so far in history that almost they merge into myths. The oldest kingdoms of Europe are not so old as this little one."

"Does the history of this country date back so far as the middle ages?"

"Oh, easily. We are very old," smiled Margot.

"Those also were times of war and bloodshed, were they not? Why, Margot, in those days they tortured prisoners, did they not?"

"Not only prisoners, excellency, but many others. If a king wished news or money, if an official wished confession of a crime—if a bishop desired confession of faith from a heretic—the torture chamber was the place to get such results."

"But not here, Margot—surely not here?"

"These very walls saw it, excellency yes!"

"But that was long ago—those places were all wiped out and forgotten ages since."

"Destroyed? Indeed, not. Do not the people of this country always preserve their monuments, their museums of weapons, their chambers of horrors? Do they not take a certain pride in that? Monarchs even of today know the secrets of the old torture chambers in this land, and perhaps in many another."

"I could not have believed it! And so there was such a place here, in this palace?"

"Surely. I can give warrant for every word I have told you, excellency. The tradition is that the old torture chamber of Gretzhoffen was over yonder—under the corner tower of the palace—where the embattlements ran in. There is a corridor which leads yonder, down below, into the vaults. I would not go there for all the world. Few of us know the way, indeed—I have never been there. We folk of Gretzhoffen palace—we are wise enough not to ask too many questions, or to learn too many truths. Besides, I should die with terror to think of what spirits must haunt such a place. But, excellency," she concluded, "let us speak of more pleasant things."

"Would you take me yonder, Margot?" asked Kitty.

The woman crossed herself devoutly. "Not on my life!" said she. "Never in the world! If it be true that the chambers are there, let others prove the truth. I do not know."

"It was but a fancy," said Kitty, turning to her couch and feigning weariness. "I will call you, Margot."

Kitty listened until her footfalls had quite died away; then, swiftly, she engaged herself upon the errand which all this time she had been planning.

She stole from her own apartments into the hall, passed along it toward the farther corner where stood the tower, until she came to another stair. Arrived upon this floor, she found herself unnoticed—that part of the palace was deserted.

Trusting only to a general sense of direction, she passed on and down—finding her own way through the labyrinth of passages, until at length she had reached the subterranean vaults which lay beneath the main edifice of the palace building.

About her now lay dampness, silence. The gloom of it all weighed heavily upon even her stout soul, used as she was by this time to terrors. But still she pushed on, the little candle which she had brought with her lighting the gloom at least faintly. She could not tell now where she was. Only there came to her the vague conviction that if there were secrets in the palace this was the way to find them. Therefore she followed such passageways as opened from time to time ahead.

There were walls of rock now on each side of her, whether of heavy masonry or hewn granite she could not tell, her light flickered so faintly on them. But at length she found herself at the end of the winding passageway. A heavy door stood before her.

Kitty flashed her light this way and that to see if she could find trace of any other visitors. The dust of the floor lay unbroken. Dust, fine, impalpable, lay on the great metal latcher of the door itself. There was a lock,

"Yonder at the Edge of the Neutral Lands, Men Are Fighting!"

yes, a vast and cumbersome affair of iron. She tried it. It did not yield. Where then was the key, if there was one?

With no special plan, she cast her light here and there along the wall. She found at last, near to the jamb of the heavy door, an iron prong projecting from the wall, on it a vast and rusty bit of iron—the key.

With all her strength she twisted the great key. At length she felt the lock turn, yield. One moment she halted, and then threw her weight against the door. It swung open, silently. She found herself within.

Had anyone, whether friend or foe, been near to Kitty Gray at that time, they would have heard her sudden scream of mortal terror—would have seen her fall and crumple, in a limp heap, on the floor.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Broken Coin

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by Grace Cunard

(Copyright, 1915, By Wright A. Patterson)

Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

TWELFTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER XLIII.

The Sinews of War.

It was touch and go between the two little kingdoms for a time. Their troops had faced each other in the open field. Blood had been shed. Generals had looked other generals in the eye at no great distance. At the lines of contact the imperial rulers of the two countries had been within earshot one of the other.

Yet they parted now. Why? The trumpets sounded the recall, even as the leaders were awaiting the summons for the charge. Why? At least one ruler had been eager for the assault, yet did not advance his troops. Why? The other, vacillating as ever of soul, none the less had been upon the battle front itself, whether or not his courage had been more than temporary. He now retired. Why?

The answer to all these questions lay in the hands of the young American girl. Sundered, the two halves of the divided Gretzhoffen coin still pleaded for reunion. One lay in the grasp of another. Had either kingdom on this day owned them both, war would have ensued.

Cortislaw of Grahoffen, old as he was, none the less was in respect of martial nature far in advance of the weak ruler of Gretzhoffen. Michael had come to the rescue not so much to save Count Frederick from danger as to save Count Frederick for himself. He needed Frederick's courage. Not so Cortislaw, who retired to his own city fuming and full of ire. Evil was that hour for the courtiers of Grahoffen, and worst of all for the unfortunate Sachio, who had promised so much for his sovereign and himself, and who had come so far short of the measure of his promises.

"Believe me, my good friend Sachio," exclaimed Cortislaw, when at length that crestfallen individual was brought before him. "Your failure to bring me the missing half of the coin has well-night cost me my dignity and you your life. I will not longer suffer such disappointments at your hands."

"Your majesty," began Sachio, but the other raised a hand.

"We are at the brink of war now—at any moment war may be forced on us, whether we like it or not. I did not think Michael would march, but he has shown that under certain circumstances he not only can but will. If we delay we lose all the advantages of the initiative. None can tell what yonder Count Frederick will do, for at least he does not lack courage. And now he will be eager for revenge against us for the danger in which we have placed him."

"It was a danger shared by all those who engaged in the struggle for the coin," said Sachio. "We had it

Convinced Count Frederick the Room Was Empty.

in our own hands. We brought it to the very edge of our throne; it was in our country when they took it once more."

"Yes, and those persons were persons that had no more at stake than you have, Count Sachio," broke in Cortislaw, with the cold wrath his officers knew so well. "Have they more reason for success than you? Are they of greater wit than yourself? By the Lord! if those things be so, 'tis time we had better wits about us than such as yours."

Sachio hung his head, but found no speech in answer and the king went on:

"Listen now."

He beckoned about him other officers of his court, and held out before him in his palm the half coin which had come into his possession. "See what this says—it talks of treasure—treasure! We know that the Gretzhoffen treasure is enormous—we know that it is concealed in the torture chamber, whatever or wherever that may be. Beyond that we know no more. It is the other half of the coin alone that can tell us what we covet now. This half but whets our anger until we have the mate for it.

"Now, my noblemen, you who pretend to serve me and this people, once more I warn you—yonder half coin, or your resignations—or your heads."

His officials left him, all in a state bordering upon consternation, for they knew that this king was not one soon forgetful of his hatred or his revenge. They laid their heads together, Sachio desperately anxious now, and tried their best to formulate some plan. All they could conclude was that the coin had found its way back to Gretzhoffen once more in the possession of the persons who so stoutly had defended it.

Meantime these were far away as time had allowed them. The walls of Gretzhoffen sheltered now both Kitty Gray and Roleau. Close behind these rode King Michael at the head of his troops, at his side the man whose danger had called him forth—none less than Count Frederick himself.

"My dear count," exclaimed Michael in his own very pretty opinion of his prowess, "all is well that ends well. Did you not note the speed with which we came to rescue you? Was it not all magnificent?"

"Yes," replied the count. "The wit of yonder girl—her courage—they were indeed magnificent."

"Her wit? Her courage?"

"Pardon, your majesty, but was it not those things which brought you to our rescue? How else could you have known of our stress? It was she who carried the news—she, I doubt not, who also carries the coin."

"The coin? What coin? Why do you speak of it?" demanded Michael in a certain surprise. "We have that half coin in our own possession—or at least have supposed so—surely did have it but the other day. You have one half, have you not, and I the other? If either half be missing, at least I do not know where it is."

"It is in Grahoffen town this minute in every likelihood," exclaimed Count Frederick, careless of any consequences that might arise if his counterfeiting were discovered. "We had a half, that equally is sure, in our hands in the mountain fight. The young woman and myself gave it in keeping of her servant, the man Roleau—a stout fellow and a desperate fighter, as more than one of yonder army might attest."

"And where is he now?"

"That is what I cannot say," rejoined the count. At the time the danger of conflict ended I turned to find him, and he was gone, as you know. We agreed that those two, Roleau and his mistress, would meet as soon as possible. My own fear is that the young woman will take ship at any time and sail for home. With her goes the secret, for very likely Roleau would go with her."

"I do not share your fears, my dear count," he said. "In my own belief the young woman will not be so apt to leave the palace presently."

"Leave the palace?"

"Yes, she was in the charge of my people there even as I started out with the troops. I am thinking that a palace is a safer place than a ship for a young woman who is a stranger in a strange land—a beautiful young woman.

CHAPTER XLIV.

In the Name of the Law.

As for Roleau, now object of solicitude on the part of a nobleman and even a king, he was experiencing further adventures of his own. As soon as he had made his escape from the field where the three had so nearly met disaster, he made such speed as he could after Kitty, who, as he knew very well, would hasten as fast as might be to find some hiding for herself and the coin.

But where was she now? That he could not guess, for he had no means of learning that Kitty had been left in the palace of the king. Rather, he supposed that she would be at the hotel which she had made her residence. He bent his own steps thither as rapidly as might be.

He met only coldness at the office at that stately caravansary, the Ritz, where both he and his mistress, save for the intercession of the king, before this would have been set out in the streets bag and baggage.

"Mademoiselle, the young American excellency?" he asked of the clerk at the desk. "She is at home today?"

"We know nothing of mademoiselle, the young American excellency," replied that worthy coldly. "She left no announcement of her plans when she departed. She has not returned."

"Are you sure as to that?" demanded Roleau, nonplused as to what next to do.

"I am not here to make guesses on such things," rejoined the clerk. "I know nothing, and that is something."

"Nothing is enough for one of your kind to know," replied Roleau blandly. He might perhaps have engaged in still more truculent conversation with the clerk, had he not at that moment felt a hand laid on his arm.

He turned to face a sergeant of gendarmes, who drew him to one side.

"In the name of the law, you are my prisoner," said the man. "Come with me."

"On what charge then, monsieur?" demanded Roleau coolly. "It is my right to know something of that, I fancy."

"The charge is murder, as you know," said the sergeant. "The same on which you were just in charge. I am to warn you once more that what you say may be used against you at the trial.

"At the trial?" exclaimed Roleau. "I thought that was all dismissed. Did we not have the king's excuse to leave? The king himself set free my master and my mistress."

"Both your employers?" grinned the sergeant.

"I am servant of both, and certainly if either went free then so should I. Is that not true?"

"It is far from true," returned the gendarme grimly; you will see how far. Murder was committed yonder by someone, as you know. You saw it—said that you saw it. The law does not set such witnesses free."

"The king sets free whom he pleases in this land," rejoined Roleau. "I shall tell my mistress of this."

"Do so," laughed the gendarme, "a rich jest enough. But first find your mistress."

Roleau found this a proposition difficult of present answer. Others of the police closing in upon him, he went with them now peaceably as he might, to the tribunal where someone must answer for the recent crime.

The prefect greeted him grimly enough, yet with a certain exultation in his mien. It was necessary in that country, as in others, that a victim should be found for the law. Perhaps in that country more than in many others, it mattered little who that victim might be.

"So we have you again, Messer Roleau?"

"And why, may I ask your honor?" rejoined Roleau, innocently. "I was away, true, on business in other lands—business connected with my country's welfare. Having concluded that matter I returned fast as I might, and here I am."

"Criminals always come back to the scenes of their murder," asserted the prefect pompously.

"Is that true? I did not know it. As for me, I have done no crime. I was simply looking after my mistress' affairs in her room—her excellency, the young American, who is so high in the king's good will."

"That is all very well, very well, but it is not enough, as you will see," rejoined the prefect. "The king did not set you free."

"Only because the king had not yet heard from my mistress. Give me leave to bring the two together—and that may be done—and she will set all right at once. Ask her."

"I do not need to ask her. The king has set for me the task of finding yonder murderer. I must fill that task. I have done so now."

"What—myself—I am suspected of that crime! Your honor, that is impossible. There has been no proof of any crime."

"Send to the king," he added, catching a glimpse of uncertainty on the face of the prefect. "Send to my mistress. I claim that right under the law."

"I send to the king?" demanded the prefect blustering. "Why should I? I can control the process of the law without troubling royalty with details of that sort."

"But suppose there are consequences. These are ticklish times, believe me, your excellency. I have seen blood deeds done today. When a king goes to war—and our king may go before long—the life of an officer left behind is worth no more to him than that of a good fighting man taken with him to the front. Perhaps as between your honor and myself—"

The official took counsel with his own caution for a moment.

"I will myself go to the palace," said he at length. "To be sure, we cannot be too careful in the attaining of the ends of justice. If I cannot gain access to the king, I shall at least have made the attempt. If I can have an audience, I shall put something of this case before him myself. We wish not to meddle too intimately in affairs of which we do not know. But if the king disavows you—"

CHAPTER XLV.

The Chamber of Horrors.

Arrived presently in the royal palace and in the company not only of Count Frederick, but of yet other noblemen and officials, King Michael relaxed his martial front under the warming influence of the wine on which he so much relied.

"They fled," he exclaimed again and again, boastingly, as he referred to the scenes which but now he had left. "They fled before us like sheep, my dear count. With myself to lead the army—and you at my side—what chance would they have? They knew they had none, and took counsel of their wisdom for once. If they remain in that counsel, surely they will stay behind their own walls, and not give offense to our country. We would annihilate them. A half hour more, and we would have plundered their city today. Their treasure would have been ours!"

"What treasure, your majesty?" inquired Count Frederick coldly. "Would we go to war for that?"

"For what else?" smiled the king.

"For liberty, justice, freedom, your majesty."

"Tut! tut! where do you get those terms? A monk speaks! But listen, did we not march to your rescue?"

"Yes, your majesty, I am not unmindful and not unthankful. But still we lack the clue which alone can make war possible or desirable—the clue which alone has back of it motives worthy of a king and of a people."

"Well, well, what does all this mean then?" rejoined Michael, irritated. "Where do we arrive? What is it that you ask?"

"I can ask no questions and answer none, until we have found once more the young American, your majesty."

King Michael smiled in self-satisfaction at last.

"Ah, well, that is easy," said he. "I have said that she is, or should be, here in this palace. It is true she brought me the news of your plight."

Count Frederick waited for no change in the royal will, but bowed

"I Warn You—the Other Half of This Coin or Your Heads!"

himself from the room. Inquiry found for him presently the waiting woman in whose care Kitty had been placed, and together they approached the room where she had been left, some hours before, to her own devices.

They knocked, knocked again, and yet again—but got no answer. The woman at length opened the door with her own key. Her sudden exclamation convinced Count Frederick that the room was empty.

"She is up to her tricks," exclaimed he to himself. "Now I wonder—"

He did not pause to ask much of the waiting woman, but hurried away down the hall, intent on certain plans of his own.

He must find her, must see her at once. He had no real idea as to which course Kitty had taken after leaving the room, but alone after a time, he walked more slowly, he could not say why. Something came to his senses, as first not recognized—a faint scent—a perfume which it seemed to him he had known before—the perfume of violets, faint, indefinite, fragrant.

He found himself at length in a narrow hallway from which there were no side passages. It led him deeper back into the palace, its trend continually downward. Thus finally he found himself in the self-same subterranean tunnel which Kitty earlier had discovered.

"She was searching for the torture chamber!" said he to himself, with sudden conviction. "That is why she came here!"

He came at length to the great door which closed the passageway. Yes, in the dust before him were footprints, and in the dust on the door itself were finger prints! The silence and secrecy of ages had been broken within the hour.

He pushed open the door—pushed it until it met some obstruction—something which lay vaguely white upon the floor. He turned downward the flare of his light—started back from what he saw.

She lay at his feet, unconscious, helpless—dead, for all he could tell. He bent over her, doubt, terror in his eyes, and reached out his hand.

She stirred under his touch. Her eyes opened, looked into his. What she saw bending over her was the face of her enemy.

"Who is it?" she cried. "Loose me—leave me! Where am I?"

She caught her hands to her face now as there came to her once more the terror of what she had seen. She dared not look about her. "Take me away!" she moaned. "Take me away!"

He made no answer for a time.

"Why have you followed me here?" she demanded at last, half hysterically.

He spoke now, slowly, almost solemnly.

"Why?" said he. "I do not know why. I think it must have been because you were in trouble. Perhaps you called me—perhaps that is why I came."

"What do you mean? Would you taunt me now, at such a time? I have been frightened almost to the point of death—it was terrible."

"Come," said Count Frederick, and placed about her an arm on whose strength, in spite of herself, she was glad to lean.

He was guiding her toward the door. She turned and saw again that which but now had smitten her with terror. Her nerves, weakened by the long strain upon them, gave way once more.

The flare of the candle lighted up the cavernous interior at whose entrance they stood. Count Frederick saw what she had seen.

On the walls stood out hooks, steel arms which supported eyeless, grinning skulls—old—how old no one could tell. Beyond arose rods and gratings, barbed, pointed, curved. An iron chair was in a corner, and in it sat a grinning skeleton.

It was the torture chamber, the room of terrors, born of other years more savage than these, and brought down unchanged through all the centuries!

"Come," said Count Frederick, his own voice agitated. "It is no time to think of any treasure now, but you—yourself!"

He caught her away swiftly into the other passage, and flung the door shut behind them. In silence he led her along the subterranean passage and up the stairs.

He left her once more alone in her own room, to compose herself as best she might, while he went on to rejoin the king.

"So, then, you found her, faithful messenger?" demanded Michael.

"Yes, your majesty, at length. She was but strolling about to pass the time during your absence. While I know little of such matters, it seems to me that the trials of the day have been extreme for her."

King Michael ended by asking the attendance of the young woman herself; but it was just at this juncture that there arrived at the palace none less than the prefect of police, who made suppliance through several court official for admittance to audience with royalty.

"He says," ventured the last chamberlain, "that he comes regarding the murder at the Ritz hotel, in which your majesty was graciously pleased to be interested."

"Yes, yes—my dear Count Frederick, it was absurd that you should be mixed in that—or the young American—I have not had time to think of it since then. What is all this now? Bring the man in."

And so presently the prefect, abashed and much perturbed, was admitted.

"Well, well," demanded the monarch, "what is it—why do you come here?"

"For only one reason, your majesty," began the prefect humbly. "We are convinced that there is more than chance medley in this murder. The thing goes deeper than we thought at first."

"Have you no suspect?"

"One, your majesty, a person of no importance, by name Roleau."

"How now, count?" Michael turned to the nobleman who still stood near. "What think you of this matter?"

"Count Frederick considered for a moment before he replied.

"Set him free," said he at length. "Watch him. He will lead us to something perhaps. Be sure that once he is loose he will not be at rest for long."

"An excellent idea," said Michael.

Michael turned now to the matters closer to his heart—the welfare of the young American, whom he had not seen since his return to the palace. Even now she waited for admission to his presence, and he had her summoned at once.

"What! mademoiselle," cried Michael, "you are pale. You have not yet fully recovered—you have been ill?"

"Yes, your majesty," replied Kitty, smiling somewhat wanly. He now noticed that the serving woman at her side carried her wraps, and that she herself appeared ready for the street.

"What! you mean to leave us?" exclaimed he. "What does this mean?"

"Your majesty," said Kitty, "graciously allow me my absence for the time. I must return to my hotel."

It was with deep relief that finally Kitty found herself once more freed of the royal presence and the royal palace. She sped, fast as might be, back to her hotel.

Count Frederick excused himself but a moment later. To the king he announced his intention of returning to his own home. Instead, he made his way also to the Ritz hotel.

The clerk at the hotel was more deferential to the nobleman than he had been to the nobleman's servant a trifle earlier.

"Her excellency, the young American? But now she came—she may be in her room—we shall see. Shall she join you in the parlors, Monsieur le Comte?"

"In the parlors on the floor above," replied Count Frederick, rather vaguely, and passed up the broad stair. But he had certain plans of his own which did not include a public audience with the young American. Instead, he passed boldly down the hall. Before the door at which he would have announced himself he paused. He could not well escape detection if he turned back, for the voices of others came to him down the hall. And in the room beyond the door he heard another voice—apparently she was using the telephone. Yes, it was she. He waited for an instant, and found himself without intention in possession of what she said.

Kitty at the time, in fact, was telephoning to the headquarters of police asking for knowledge of her servant Roleau. Her voice went on now rapid, staccato.

"Monsieur, he was freed, Roleau—yes, yes—what then? On probation?—yes, I know. He was here—he was followed

It Was the Torture Chamber—the Room of Terrors!

to the rendezvous of the apaches—yes, yes—by whom?—why? He is there now, perhaps?—Ah, bah! what manner of officers are you? What is your plan in all this—to have him killed by thieves in turn?"

Count Frederick paused to hear no more, but flushed guiltily over his eavesdropping retraced his steps down the hall and sought more decorous means of meeting the young woman whom he wished to see. But even as he did so he reflected that from the detached exclamations he had heard surely she was planning yet other adventures. If Roleau had been here—if he had been followed away by the police toward the thieves' headquarters—surely this undaunted girl would in turn do what she could to rescue him. If so, once more she herself would need assistance.

Count Frederick stepped to one side in the hotel lobby and bided his time. It was as he thought. Before long Kitty hastened through the lobby and out toward the street. Evidently she had paused to make no more than slight changes in her toilet. Beyond question the purpose in her mind was to find Roleau.

Count Frederick strolled toward the desk and nodded pleasantly to the questioning clerk. "Yes," said he, "I was so fortunate—"

He did not pause to say definitely in what way he had been fortunate, but, unhurried, strolled down the steps into the street, intent on nothing so much as upon discovering what Kitty Gray next would do.

It was now a curious train that of those persons engaged in the search for the musterious coin. Roleau had indeed found an occupant in the room of his mistress when he hastened thither the moment he was released from csutody. That occupant, however, was not his mistress, but another—none less than a member of the apache band who had held her apartments under espionage. Roleau, hiding himself, waited for the appearance of the intruder—followed him out from the hall into the street. This had been but the moment before Kitty's return. The prefect had ordered Roleau's discharge by telephone from the palace, almost as she was leaving, and both she and Roleau had hastened to the hotel.

Now, as Kitty emerged, followed by Count Frederick, yet another one of Blake's underworld band stepped out from his hiding place and followed Count Frederick himself. And all of these, each was in pursuit of the coveted Gretzhoffen coin.

As for Roleau, his man made rapid progress, and it was not long before he had trailed him to the rendezvous of the band which he himself previously had learned. Undaunted, he would have pursued the fugitive to the inner chamber of the rendezvous had not he heard a sound which caused him to pause.

It was at this time that Blake, leader of the band of thieves, chanced to return to the rendezvous. He had passed part way into the subterranean passage when he looked on ahead just in time to see one of his men emerge from the central room and make a spring at an intruder whom he himself at once recognized as the man who at this very scene earlier had given him so desperate a battle—who later had given him into the hands of the law.

Thinking only of revenge now, forgetting the coin, the renegade leader whipped out his revolver and fired point blank at Roleau.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The BROKEN COIN by EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

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Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

THIRTEENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER XLVI.

By Process of Elimination.

The weapon of the renegade leader Blake was aimed steadily enough. But the fraction of time in which Roleau changed the position he had taken saved the life of one man and cost that of another.

It was the fellow thief, Blake's comrade, fresh from the rendezvous, who fell under the bullet intended for Roleau himself.

Blake sprang forward, groping under cover of the smoke, to find the body of his enemy, stooped, paused, sprang back—it was not Roleau, but his own man whom he had slain!

Roleau by this time, with no more than a quick flash of self-congratulation at his unexpected safety, had sprung away. Blake called out to his followers and started after Roleau. He did not meet him at the outer opening, but ran into the arms of the band of gendarmes who had followed Roleau hither.

Seeing the renegade, pistol in hand, and knowing that he had fired the shot just heard, the sergeant seized upon Blake and disarmed him. The apache leader fought with all the bitter desperation of his kind when cornered, crying aloud for help. His cries brought others of the band, who joined in the melee, so that the issue for a time was in doubt as between the lawful and the lawless—these last two factions who were locked in struggle by reason of the fortunes of the missing coin.

At this juncture Roleau flung himself into the conflict. His giant strength proved such aid that finally the sergeant and his men had subdued not only Blake the leader, but others of his band. As for Roleau, he stood grinning at the turn of events and making no further attempt at escape. Neither did the officer make any movement to apprehend him again.

"Come with me, then, my friend," said the officer. "You have fought well for me. We shall see what we shall see."

Wherefore Roleau, no longer under espionage, went back with the gendarmes toward the headquarters of the prefecture.

Much of this was noted by Kitty Gray herself, who arrived upon the scene in time to witness this not unhappy end of her own quest. Count Frederick in turn found his own errand done. These two likewise turned toward the Hotel de Ville.

He Heard the Deep Voice of Sachio.

"Monsieur le prefect," announced the servant, when at last they had reached the presence of that official, "this man"—pointing to Blake—"fired on this other man and tried to kill him. That is what I do not understand."

The sound of the entrance of others at the office now attracted their attention.

"Your excellency," announced the sergeant, "these others, the young American—Count Frederick—"

The prefect turned his gaze upon the new arrivals, himself none too well pleased. He found them but complicating factors here in his own business of finding a victim for the law.

"What do you say now to this, sir?"—he accosted Roleau.

"I say now, your excellency, that yonder thief and leader of thieves, who tried to kill me, knows all there is to be known of the murder. He can tell, if he likes, or if he does not like. He wanted there what we wanted—we will call it a jewel that he sought in her gracious excellency's rooms. He guessed that it might have value with persons high in power in this country. That is why he followed us; that is why murder was done there. They all sought something, and we know what it was."

"You are the accused," said the prefect, turning swiftly to Blake, his own decision made. "What have you to say? Why do you not speak? Confess that you know the secret of yonder murder—the motive for which we ourselves now know. I know you, Blake. Your band is broken now. How do you wish to spend the rest of your life—would you purchase a few more moments at the price of a confession of the truth? Perhaps that may be, when you have tasted the dungeon—away from that drug you crave—for a few hours."

"I will confess," suddenly exclaimed the king of the apaches, his face gray with terror. "I will tell you everything—only give me—it."

"Then you killed the man in yonder room?"

Blake tried to speak, but only nodded. Then at length, hoarsely, "It is as he said. What can I gain by delay or by denial? Give me—that! Give me—it! I confess it all."

"What was your motive, then, Blake?"

"You heard it. He told you. I wanted what they had—the coin—the Gretzhoffen coin."

"As to the coin, your honor," broke in the deep voice of Count Frederick at this time, "I submit there is no need of examination of anyone in regard to that.

The prefect looked at him, willing to punish any who cast slight upon his power, but knowing himself helpless. Count Frederick smiled icily in turn.

"Shall we three bid you good day, your honor?"

The perfect bowed politely as he might.

Count Frederick only smiled, and turned toward the door. He stepped back, gravely, allowing Kitty Gray to pass. After her followed the faithful Roleau. Frederick smiled again, and looked after the two not unhappily, although he saw where the greater allegiance of his former servant now lay.

'At last, Roleau!" exclaimed Kitty, eagerly, when finally they two were alone at their hotel. "We are free, all of us—you, and I, and—"

"And his excellency, le Comte Frederick."

"Well, yes, himself as well, then. Nor am I sorry that is true. I fancy perhaps I may have been unjust to him. He has done much, after all, for me, his enemy."

"What, you, his enemy?" grinned Roleau. "Not in the least. Au contraire, mademoiselle!"

"Tais-toi!" exclaimed Kitty, her color rising once more.

CHAPTER XLVII.

To Arms.

Dispersed under the wrath of their savage sovereign, the courtiers of Grahoffen were cudgeling their wits to find some solution to the problem of finding the coin. Where was it? How could it be gained? Upon Count Sachio more than upon any nobleman of the court this question rested grievously. He enlisted therefore as his confederate a man belonging to the secret police in Grahoffen, Ladislaw, a cunning chap with courage.

"Ladislaw," said he, "we must go to Gretzhoffen at once. The coin is there. Either that young woman has it or Count Frederick, or the king. The latter is most likely of the three."

It came out much as Sachio had reasoned. In the confusion now prevailing in Gretzhoffen the two passed unchallenged even to the palace door.

As for the king, he was by this time well forward in his wine. He received Sachio and his friend readily enough. Little it mattered to him who came, for all were welcome. He reproved for his hesitation the chamberlain who announced Sachio.

"Let him come to us," said he. "Let them all come. They are welcome, Sachio?—yes, many a bottle we two have split together."

Not one, but more than one bottle, forsooth, did they two split between them now, and meantime Ladislaw, secret agent, unnoticed, was here and there, in this room and others, unmolested, as a friend of the king, and busy with purposes of his own.

In the chambers of the king all was given over to wine and boastfulness.

There was one who did not accept thus lightly the issue of the day. Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen, most serious of mind by this time, had turned his steps toward the palace, pondering many things meantime. It was now his own deliberate purpose to demand some decision of his monarch as to the eminent enterprise with which all Gretzhoffen was soon to be concerned. He had given orders, as an officer of the army high in power, to mobilize all the forces of the kingdom.

And even as these plans quietly went forward here, King Cortislaw of Grahoffen was pacing his floor, consumed with wrath of a sort not easily placated. "Listen, gentlemen," said he to his officers who gathered about him after Sachio had departed. "Why do you wait. We will win all, or we will lose all today. March then! Cortislaw calls every man under arms to join the colors now!"

Thus, as Count Frederick made his way to the palace, the military forces of both countries were making ready for a struggle which might soon ensue. He passed almost without plan, toward that portion of the palace where he knew he would find King Michael. But at a moment when he was alone and passing near a door which made off from the hall, he heard voices—one voice which suddenly he had conviction was familiar to him—the deep voice of Sachio of Grahoffen! He held his breath that he might catch every word that came from the room within.

"Listen! Ladislaw," he heard Sachio say. "What, did you tell me that you had it? Give it to me, in my hand! It cannot be true."

"None the less, it is true," said another voice, that of the man called Ladislaw. Apparently he held out something which both regarded.

"Ladislaw, you have won fortune for us both. There is no price can be put upon this half of the coin. It is ours, at last."

Count Frederick smiled to himself—smiled for an instant only.

"Yes, Sachio," he heard the answer. "Now if we had our other half here, we could join the two."

"I do not need it," exclaimed Sachio, exultantly. "I have it in my head. I know the reading of both. It tells of the secret recess under the floor of the torture chamber."

Count Frederick heard Sachio laugh deeply—heard his voice once more, self-satisfied.

"Never again," said Sachio, "will I abuse good wine! It fuddled a king for our use and benefit today."

"You are going—there?"

"Yes. To the last hiding place of what we seek."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

In the Torture Chamber.

Count Frederick heard them approach the door, and darted around the nearest corner. He knew which way Sachio would go, and gave him time to establish a lead.

Sachio went straight enough for a time, guided only by his sense of direction, but at length he halted, confused in the passageways which ramified and spread this way and that. It was at that moment that Frederick, himself surprised, came upon him suddenly. The two stood for half an instant, facing each other.

"My dear Frederick," exclaimed Sachio, looking his man fair in the face with that courage which had more than once stood him in such good stead. "How fortunate! I was just on my way on an errand of the king."

"I know something of the ways below here," said Frederick. "I have been here often. Perhaps between us we may discover what you seek. In view of what so recently has passed, it would be easier for you to be our enemy than our friend—is it not true, dear Sachio?"

Sachio made no reply. They walked forward, descending, advancing into the darker portions of the subterranean passages.

"By the way, my dear Sachio," said Frederick, at length—he had Sachio just slightly by the arm, and walked abreast of him, so there might be not sudden treachery—"there is a room yonder where we have long hidden our medieval armor of this palace. Would you like to see it? It is just beyond."

"It is dark," said Sachio, laughing lightly, and hesitating. "What is there in there?"

"It might be the very torture chamber of old Gretzhoffen, my dear Sachio! It might be the treasure chamber of the king himself—the old king! It might be here that were concealed the treasures of Gretzhoffen—is it not true? You know of them?"

"I have never heard of them, my dear Frederick," replied Sachio.

"Not so, my friend. You have half the coin. It is but counterfeit. The true half—that half which you sought in my quarters so feloniously—is in possession of another."

"You mean that wench—that American—"

It was that instant that the heavy hand of Count Frederick smote him full in the face. "You shall not mention her!" he growled; and the next instant he had Sachio by the shoulders and was thrusting him with all his power toward the open door. It had all along been his intention to imprison Sachio here in the torture chamber.

The next moment Count Frederick felt at his back the impact of another man. The three struggled furiously.

"Quick! Shoot him!" panted Sachio. "Kill him! I cannot last!"

"I am not armed," cried Ladislaw. "Let me search."

Frederick felt the hands of his new enemy feeling at his pockets, searching for some weapon, and rejoiced that he also at the moment was unarmed. At least the conflict would be more even now.

But they were more than a match for him. Count Frederick felt an arm throttle him, felt his eyes almost start from his head, felt his breath leaving him. Slowly slipping, inch by inch, he felt himself impelled toward the open door. Strive as best he could, he found himself unable to resist the joint attack of these two desperate men.

A moment later he heard the heavy clang of the door behind him.

He was alone. He had proved the victim of the plan which he had

The Sergeant Seized Upon Blake.

formed. He was locked in the torture chamber of Gretzhoffen, that place of horror which he had reserved for his enemy. He had failed. He had lost all—all! He had been the cause, perhaps, of the ruin of his country!

CHAPTER XLIX.

Le Roi S'Amuse.

It was not often in his muddled life that Michael had so full warrant to give rein to his impulses. He had not noted the absence of Sachio or Ladislaw. After a time, his attendants, hesitating, told him that a woman was waiting to be admitted. Her name was one which came to his brain now above all others.

"Admit her at once, yes—why do you delay?"

She came before him now, pale, downcast, almost trembling. Heavy enough had been the burden of anxiety she long had carried. She had come to the king, but she sought not this weak king's comforting. No, she had come hither in search of the man on whom even the king must rely.

"Ah, mademoiselle," he began, half maudlin, "you have come to us at last. Why were you so absurdly long? We have grieved for you, and who would grieve the king?"

"Your majesty," said Kitty Gray, and half shuddered as she gave the title, gazing as she did upon the bloated face of this man who claimed to be a king. "Your majesty, you are more than kind to remember so unimportant a person."

"Unimportant! Do not say that word. Unimportant—when all we have thought of was yourself. What has kept you away?—though I am sure you came as soon as you could."

"Yes, your majesty, as soon as I could."

"And because you have heard of what we have done today, of how we have routed the army of yonder King Cortislaw—it was cleverly done, mademoiselle, though I do say it."

"And what of him who was with you, your majesty?"

"Whom do you mean? Count Sachio?"

"Count Sachio? Was he here, your majesty? I meant another."

"Ah, always you mean that other. Always he seeks to come between his king and his king's desire," said he, complainingly.

"And what is it that your majesty desires?"

"Why, my majesty desires a many things, my dear," he replied, in vinous liberty. "My majesty desired, a while ago, an extra bottle of Beloc, and my majesty sent a man. Count Sachio, yonder to bring it. My majesty desires—"

"Sachio here!"

"Yes, here. You have said that twice. He was here, twice or once—I know not how many times. But now you are here, mademoiselle, and that is enough. My majesty desires—"

He advanced toward her. The leer upon his puffed face gave her swift disgust as well as terror. With no purpose whatever, as he stumbled forward she fled from the room, fled she knew not where.

Without much plan, Kitty turned toward the interior of the palace, and down the long hall which before that time she had explored. Something told her that Frederick, if he were here in the palace now, had passed that way.

The torture chamber—that dread spot! Must she go there to look for him? She sped on rapidly along these passageways which she had learned before. Through the last deep sunken tunnel which led to the door of the torture chamber itself she passed alone, trembling with fear, and yet resolved.

The door was locked. She turned to see the key upon the wall. As she turned there came to her a faint sound. Someone was knocking at the door. The blood stopped at her heart. She felt her face go cold. Had the dead indeed come to life? Was it indeed true that some hand from beyond the grave alone could point out the hiding place of this treasure? What could it mean?

But the knocking at the door grew bolder. She heard a voice—a faint voice through the steel facing of the inner cavern. Trembling, she fitted the key, gave one great push to open the door, which yielded the more quickly to a power exerted within. She saw the faint gleam of a light added to those of her own candle; saw the face of the man she had sought!

"You?" she cried. "It is you?"

She heard him answer calmly, slowly, without agitation, as though all the time he had been convinced she would come.

"It is ended," said Count Frederick at last, slowly. "Never again will I doubt! I prayed for you, prayed that you should understand before I died. But it was meant for you to come for me, that I might know—know as much as they who are here, who have been my fellows and my friends. Mademoiselle—I had said good-by to everything excepting one. There was that left which no man should die without knowing—that experience which only makes life worth living. I have dreaded all things, but now I hope. I must—I shall hope!"

He stooped toward her now, and for the moment each was careless of the strange surroundings in which they stood. For a half moment the heart of Kitty Gray was on the point of surrender.

"Monsieur le comte, for that we have no time now," said she gently. "It was but chance which brought me here."

"Chance? Yes, if fate, if the hand of heaven mean chance, I shall call it chance, not otherwise. I say that it was the plan of fate long ago that you should come to me, now and here."

"We have come close to the secret," said Kitty Gray slowly. "But we have come closer to perils."

"True, more than you know."

"What do you mean?"

"Sachio was here—it was he and his man who thrust me in here, where I had planned to place him. They know it all—all that we do now, mademoiselle. Sachio himself has gone to carry his news to his king. We are undone, mademoiselle! There will be war."

"If war, then why do we wait here?" she demanded of him. "War is what we have sought to avoid for this kingdom by our own knowledge of the coin. If it be too late—why, then, we must fight. Ah, how I wish I were a man, that I might fight as well."

"You have fought well for all of us, mademoiselle," said Frederick. "We have repulsed our enemies. Would you repulse—your friend?"

She made no answer, but was away before him in the dark passageway.

CHAPTER L.

The Battle.

Sachio and Ladislaw, as may be guessed, allowed no grass to grow under their feet as they hastened toward their own kingdom, leaving behind them the befuddled monarch who had no idea that he had entertained such vipers.

They never reached the confines of Grahoffen kingdom; instead they met the army of Cortislaw already afield and well across the neutral lands.

"Look!" cried Sachio. "Cortislaw is afoot! By the Lord! Yonder comes a real king."

It was even so. Soon they were among the advance guards, the skirmishers of the main force, which were advancing. In time they were brought to the bodyguard of the king himself, for Cortislaw marched with his men, after the fashion of monarchs of old. He had put all his fortunes to the test that day.

"What! Sachio," he said, as he grimly regarded that nobleman. "You have failed again?"

"No, your majesty, I have not failed. I bring you success, at last."

He opened the palm which he raised before the eyes of his king. In it lay the broken half of the Gretzhoffen coin.

"The coin!—by our lady! It is ours! Bring it to me closer. Give it to me! Let me see!"

"The secret is ours!" said he. "The torture chamber—the treasure!"

"It lies in the northeast corner of the palace, deep under the walls," said Sachio. "Come, let us march steadily, toward the unsuspecting city of Gretzhoffen, governed by an addled king too far gone in his cups to suspect danger of any sort—a king never strong, and now weaker than his wont at a time when all the forces of a real king were needed."

They met no resistance at the walls of Gretzhoffen itself. The armies of King Michael were not in evidence.

The people of Gretzhoffen ran this way and that, leaderless. "Where are our forces?" they demanded. "Where is the army? Where is the king? Where is Count Frederick?"

To these demands came no present answer. The forces of the enemy advanced along the avenues.

"Yonder it lies, your majesty," said Count Sachio, pointing to the castle which they approached. "Deep beneath the walls yonder, in the northeast corner, my eyes saw the torture chamber of Gretzhoffen."

"Did you find the treasure?" demanded Cortislaw.

"No, your majesty, that was exploration fit for your majesty's hands alone. I did not search for it. Rather, I hastened to bring your majesty here in your own person."

"We soon shall know," said Cortislaw, and signaled the advance.

The sound of hoofs and trampling feet filled the streets of Gretzhoffen. The army of Gretzhoffen, in close formation, marched forward under the summons of the buglers. Quickly passing down the main avenue which led to the palace, they spread out by columns right and left, covering the full front of that edifice, which lay before them hidden in its screen of shrubbery.

"Look, your majesty," said Sachio, and pointed.

Through a little break in the screening wall of green he saw the plume of a horseman, who sat motionless as though waiting.

"One of their guards!" exclaimed Cortislaw. "Go take him. Stop for nothing. Press on into the palace itself."

The front ranks broke forward, each eager to be the first to take captive the foeman thus discovered.

Not one man, but many hundreds, met their coming—the forces of Gretzhoffen in ambush. In the first front the picked men of the guard had been stationed under the screening shrubbery by the actual commander in chief of the Gretzhoffen forces that day—none less than Count Frederick himself.

In such brief time as had been allowed him, he had made his arrangements and posted his forces in what he conceived to be the only feasible strategy. Now the jaws were sprung. Whether trap or victim should prove the stronger was later to be known.

The bugles of Gretzhoffen, high and clear, sounded the counter-charge. The advancing forces of Grahoffen were met full in the face by a level sleet of missiles, and from their covering the forces of Gretzhoffen sprang out, section after section. Face to face, line against line, the two detachments met in the shock of arms.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Advancing Hosts of Grahoffen Were Met by a Sleet of Missiles.

The Broken Coin

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by Grace Cunard

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

(Copyright, 1915, by Wright A. Patterson)

Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

FOURTEENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER LI.

The Last Arbitrament.

The call to arms was as music to Count Frederick's ears. Leaving his idle, addled king steeped in his follies, he hurried to the front.

The army was ready enough to put itself under his control; recognized him as the one ruler in all the realm. His quick orders, supplementing the arrangements of the day before, soon set all events in train. It had been his plan to mask his men deep within the town; and, as has been said, the jaws of the trap now were sprung.

The charge of the forces of King Cortislaw was met by the counter-shock of the Gretzhoffen arms. Frederick's forces sprang forward with the enthusiasm of troops long in leash, and swept back the invaders. For a few moments the two lines writhed here and there in deadly embrace, as two well-matched wrestlers, neither having the advantage.

Deep within the palace Kitty had forgotten her errand in the greater import of these sudden events. The coin had done all this—it was indeed a thing of omen, a thing of destiny.

She peered from the palace windows here and there, seeking to gain some knowledge of the fray. Now and then a wounded man limped back. Others came, carried by the litter-bearers of the palace. Defeat was at hand for the defenders of the palace.

"Is there no hope, then?" she demanded of one of the high officials of the household. "Where are our reserves? See, our men can hold them no longer—they must have help or all is lost."

The official, thus adjured, pulled himself together for a moment of thought.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "there is a regiment held in reserve back of the palace, toward the water front."

"Then summon them at once!" exclaimed the young woman.

Presently the retiring troops heard the sound of bugles, the clatter of hoofs from the opposite direction; saw the advance of the Gretzhoffen reserves so badly needed. They swept on now to the front, rallying their retreating men. The leader of the reserves looked around for the commander of the battle; instead he saw the figure of a young girl flash down the palace steps and hurry toward them.

"Yonder!" she cried. "He is at the front, supporting their full attack."

It was time now for the reserves, that was sure. Close to his own thinning front line, Frederick sat, from his saddle scanning the work of a battery hidden somewhere back of the advance of the Grahoffen troops, which was raining ruin on his own men. It was hidden somewhere, he could not tell where, although he swept the line beyond with the glasses time after time.

At last he found it, marked it by the smoke belched from a screen of green—green branches lashed to the frames of guns.

Count Frederick called an officer to him. "We must take that battery," he said. "If we don't, in five minutes we will be gone."

Meantime Sachio himself, bold leader of armed men, albeit self-seeking courtier, openly exulted at what seemed to him the quick success of his country's arms. He held on, directly under the eye of Cortislaw himself, and no unskilled soldier he now showed himself to be.

"In five minutes, your majesty," said he, "we will have broken their front. There will remain nothing but for us to advance."

His eye, skilled in observation in such scenes, caught sight of the mounted figure of Count Frederick, leader of the Gretzhoffen arms. He recognized him in the distance—and quickly sent orders to the officer of the battery. Whether or not it was due to this slight change of aim, the next salvo from the hidden guns accomplished that which Sachio most desired. Sachio turned his glasses once more upon the spot where his enemy had sat. His horse was down, blown to pieces by the explosion of a shell, and the tall figure of Frederick himself lay prone!

"Now, forward, men!" cried Sachio. "They have broken! They will run! At them with the bayonet! Charge!"

The Grahoffen troops swept forward. Man to man, now, the ultimate issue must be determined. It was at this moment that, coming on at a gallop from the protection of the palace grounds, the reserve regiment deployed into action in regimental front, the leader cheering his men on into the charge. They met the advancing infantry of Grahoffen, many of them with their rifles unloaded, depending upon the bayonet—met them, and rode them down. The line of assault, unsuspecting this new resistance, recoiled and turned.

Kitty had pressed forward behind the column which now pushed back the advance of the enemy.

The plan of Count Frederick was completed. But as to Count Frederick, where was he? She found him at last, surrounded by a little group of his men, who supported him as he lay.

"What do you here, mademoiselle?" said he. "Retire at once. This is no place for you."

"You are alive! You will recover!" Kitty Gray was on her knees beside him.

Frederick essayed to rise, but fell back for a moment. "Give me a moment's time," said he. "I am not hurt. The shell came close, but my horse saved me, I suppose. I am but slightly wounded. I think it was the shock of the explosion. I was dazed for an instant. Where are my men? Come, let me up!"

"Your men are on ahead, Count Frederick," replied Kitty Gray; "too far for you to catch them up now. Come, you must rest. Come with me."

"With you, mademoiselle?" she heard him say. He staggered to his feet.

But now—and her woman's heart admiring ever the strong and resolute, rejoiced to see it—Count Frederick's gaze was turned not to her but toward the front where the fighting lay.

"My men," said he. "Look at them—the royal reserves! Who brought them on? We have won! They are broken. The battle is ours, after all!"

CHAPTER LII.

Roleau, the Spy.

In all these rapid events of the last few hours Roleau had been left quite to his own resources. His mistress had slipped away from him without his knowledge. Count Frederick was gone, he knew not where. He guessed rather than knew that each of them might be seeking the other. That meant, according to his reasoning, that they must be at or near the royal palace. It was thither Roleau at length turned his own footsteps.

Discovered at last through the notice attracted by his lack of uniform, he was halted by an officer, who brought him forthwith to the commander of the army, none less than Sachio, who sat close to the king, watching the progress of the battle.

"General," said the officer to Sachio, "here is a man who was trying to get through our lines. What shall we do with him? We think perhaps he is a spy."

"So, fellow, you are here again?" he said, grimly. "I know you, yes, well enough. We have met more than once before now. I recall you at my lodging, and elsewhere. What do you here? Where is she, your mistress, the young American?"

"Yonder somewhere, excellency," said Roleau, pointing toward the palace.

"Take him away, lieutenant, and keep him safe until I call for him."

It was thus that Roleau remained for a time unobserved, but was ultimately caught in the general rout of King Cortislaw's armies. It was night when finally the rout ended under the walls of Grahoffen itself.

Cortislaw was an old man when he had started out that day. Since morning he had aged yet a dozen years. Nothing was left to him! The end of his life's dream was at hand.

"Curses upon all things!" exclaimed old Cortislaw, at last, sweeping a level glance under his bushy gray brows at his courtiers. "Once more they have proved too much for us. It was my one remaining chance."

None dared raise a voice against the wrath of the broken king. After a time, he went on:

"What use, then, Count Sachio, was their coin, after all? We had it, and we lost."

"Count Frederick told me, your majesty," began Sachio, "that what we had was only a counterfeit. He said he gave it to the king of Gretzhoffen in a bit of deceit for purposes of his own. It read the same—that I may be sworn. Its errand should have been the same. But as to our victory—look, it was counterfeit."

"Yes," said Cortislaw, slowly, "count that not for us, but against us. I say the cursed coin is bewitched—it is in the service of Gretzhoffen, not our own. It is the evil spirt of our own kingdom, that I will be sworn."

"But," said Count Sachio, after a time, "the end never is till all is done. True, we have failed at arms, your majesty, but after all, that does not affect the existence of the Gretzhoffen treasure. I myself have been in that room. I have been beneath the walls—I know the very place where that secret is concealed. Look, we have all the coin—and even if this half is counterfeit, their half, the true half though it be, is no more than half. They cannot read the riddle of their own treasure, and yet we know it! Who, then, has won this battle? Riches are needful for any king. Without the secret which we ourselves hold, what may they hope? No, not all is yet lost, your majesty!"

The old king turned upon him his burning eye. "Count Sachio," said he, "you have disappointed me time and again regarding yonder coin; yet after all, of all my noblemen, you have been the most successful, for surely you brought to us the secret. That is true. At one time we had all the coin. Long we have had half the coin. Today we held it all in our possession, and we still hold it. Bring me the coin. I want to examine both halves once more with my own eyes."

"It is well, your majesty. I will go get both halves, we will compare them."

Count Sachio hastened to the room where on his return from the battlefield he had changed his dusty apparel. His tunic and trousers lay where he had left them. Evidently his orderly had fled.

Count Sachio took up the trousers and thrust a hand into a pocket. He knew where he had kept the coin, in his little leather folding portemonnaie. But he withdrew his hand and looked at it curiously. The blank look on his face remained as he felt quickly in other pockets of the same garment, as he searched nervously through every pocket of the tunic which he had discarded.

When Count Sachio returned to his king he was in deep pallor; consternation sat on his face.

"Well, well, Sachio!" demanded that monarch, testily, "You have on your face now the same look which I have learned to know. But surely you have not failed. Come, let me see it."

"I cannot, your majesty. It is gone!"

"Gone? Yet you had it?"

"Yes, your majesty. Both halves—I had them both. You yourself gave them in my keeping on the field. I was responsible for them, that is true. But, see here where I hid them—everything is empty now. They have been taken away by someone. And who could have known of it?"

A silence fell upon the group.

"Stay!" added Sachio a little later—"there was a man, a prisoner, who was brought to me just before our retreat began—the man named Roleau."

"Find that man!" said Cortislaw, coldly, returning a savage eye upon Sachio.

The prisoners taken by the Grahoffen men, more by chance than plan in their own tempestuous retreat, had been grouped under loose guard in the rear compound of the Grahoffen palace. It was with them that Roleau had been confined. Thither Count Sachio now turned his steps. Hastily he inquired of this officer and that, of this prisoner and that.

Once more the spy Roleau had escaped!

The Army of Gretzhoffen in Action.

CHAPTER LIII.

By Land and Sea.

In the confusion which followed the retreat of the Grahoffen troops upon their own capital, Roleau found himself swept away from the officer who first had taken him in charge.

Roleau, not unused to scenes of violence, had himself well in hand, and now studied his situation calmly, finding it somewhat to his own advantage. He say that he now had better opportunity for escape than at any time before.

Resolved at last, he slipped away beyond his guards, and made off through the city, not to the westward toward the plain which lay between the two cities, but to the east where lay the water front of Grahoffen.

The desert which lay between these two little kingdoms ran far to the southward in a barren peninsula, on either side of which swept the blue sea. Each kingdom, therefore, might be said to have a seaport as good as the other, although that of Gretzhoffen lay closer to the Mediterranean proper. Nevertheless, the Grahoffen harbor was an ample one, and here all the tiny navy of the little kingdom lay—beyond the aviation grounds where the scanty corps of that service sometimes held their maneuvers.

As may be seen, each of these little kingdoms, jealous of the other, and rivaling methods of richer empires than their own, had developed as best it could each branch of the service approved in modern warfare. Each had its little corps of air craft, each its miniature navy, its submarines, its destroyers.

Full details of all this Roleau did not know. He knew well enough, none the less, that escape for him lay by water and not by land.

It was night when he approached the wharves along the Grahoffen harbor front. At their anchorage lay the dim gray bulks of the few battleships belonging to Cortislaw. At one of the docks signs of activity attracted him. A yacht, a long, clean-lined vessel, a thoroughbred in all details, beautifully equipped and apparently well manned and officered, was getting ready to set out. Roleau looked at it closely. It bore the royal ensign. In truth, it was none less than the yacht of royalty itself.

"Good morrow, sir," said Roleau to the captain of the yacht, before whom he presented himself a little later. "I see you are setting out. Would you take a passenger, one as anxious as yourself to leave this place?"

The captain looked at this intruder for a moment with none too much favor.

"This boat is not for charter," said he. "We are leaving, it is true, but we offer no passage for the public."

"Nor am I under charter for the public," rejoined Roleau calmly. "I am in high service. None the less, I am ready to pay for transportation from this place. I am careless where you may be sailing. Ask me not too many questions, and I will not inquire of you, my dear captain, why you are now sailing with the king's yacht."

This bold chance thrust went home. Roleau suspected now that the captain was sailing under orders of his own and for reasons of his own. The man hesitated now.

"Well, then," said he, at length, "we have room, that is true. But as to refugees—"

"Call me no refugee!" said Roleau firmly. "I tell you, I am on business of importance, and care little where you go, save only that you take me hence, I can pay."

By this time Roleau was aboard. The captain neither welcomed him nor repulsed him. He only shrugged his shoulders, and accepted some coins which Roleau placed in his hand.

CHAPTER LIV.

By Air and Water.

Roleau wakened at dawn. The ripple of water was in his ears. The yacht was under way. Soon it was out of earshot of all that went forward at the wharves. None aboard might know what meant the little group of men who hurried here and there along the water front, giving this order and that.

"In the king's name!" one man cried.

It was, indeed, in the king's name, for now, shallow though was his disguise, none less than Cortislaw had joined Sachio in this last pursuit of the evasive coins. Hurried inquiry had convinced Sachio that Roleau had made his escape in this direction.

As for Cortislaw, he raged.

"It is nothing, your majesty," rejoined the dauntless Count Sachio. "All is not ended till all is done. We shall not let them evade us. Come, we have craft of our own. Here are some of our fast boats. Would your majesty dare the submarine?"

"I dare anything that another man dare," rejoined Cortislaw savagely. "Quick, then—order the first boat ready."

Now in truth the nobleman and his sovereign were to embark in a novel undertaking. The long, slim fish-nosed craft, with its upright periscope, received them. They heard the hatch closed firm above them, heard the singing of the air pumps and saw the gray opaque wall of the water, not below them, but around them, above them, as at length the craft, obedient to the command of its officer, slid out from its slip into the harbor and headed forward after what had been pointed out to it as its prey.

Part of the time submerged, most of the time just breaking the surface with the deck, they sped on.

When at length, with hatches open and access given to the deck, they sped on, unsubmerged, close upon their quarry, none of them at first heard the curious humming which came on from the rear, none for the moment saw the vast shape which approached from behind them and above, sailing like some monster bird.

The Army of Grahoffen Retreating.

It was Count Sachio at length who turned, his attention arrested by the familiar sound of an air craft motor.

"Look! your majesty," said he, turning and pointing.

A sudden exclamation came from the lips of Cortislaw.

"It is from Gretzhoffen!" he said. "Our own air craft are not mobilized. I wonder who planned that raid. You told me Count Frederick was killed—that you saw it with your own eyes. That cannot be. King Michael, weak as he is, never would be afoot—never would he have had his air craft moving at this hour. They have been above our city—it is a mercy if they have not dropped bombs upon our shipping."

"Look!" said Sachio. He indicated now the course of the pursuing air craft, which, far from following them directly, now swept aside in a great tangent.

"They are bound also for the yacht!" said Sachio. "It is not us, but yonder boat they are pursuing. What does it mean? Surely they can have marked us under water or above—they see us now, if they have eyes. But now they evade us and pursue the boat which we pursue. What does it mean? And who is in command?"

Slow enough would even keen-witted Count Sachio have been to guess the real answer to his own question. It was his enemy who was in command of this pursuing air craft—Count Frederick, not killed, but in full possession of his powers once more.

It had been Frederick's plan to hasten across the neutral lands and over Grahoffen itself in a foray of scouting and discovery. He wished to see whether the forces of the enemy would rally or whether they were to lie utterly broken, accepting their defeat. And at the last instant, when he had stepped into the seat of the air craft, he had been followed by one who would not accept denial from him—the young American. Thus they had swept across the broad plain, across the city of Grahoffen itself, and along the water front—and now far down the great arm of the sea which thrust up from the south.

The aeroplane for a time fell off from the direct course held by the submarine. Ahead of the wind and driven at top speed by its own tremendous engines, it advanced in vast sweeps and swoops, at a speed incalculably fast.

"Your majesty," said Count Sachio at length, laying down the glasses with which he had been examining the ship of the air which passed above them, "I was wrong! At first I thought some leader of their aviation corps had developed this raid today, but it is not so. I told you that Count Frederick was dead. My eyes must have deceived me. It is he, yonder! He himself is guiding this pursuit. With him there is another—a woman, your majesty! It is none less than the young American, who has been the most dangerous enemy we yet have met. They two—for what reason I am not informed—are aloft together. Their purpose I can only guess."

The rage of Cortislaw now was such as left him silent.

"Your majesty," said Count Sachio at last, "it must be as your majesty reasons. But it is by sinking yonder craft, not by saving it, that he can most hurt us. Yes, I am convinced, yonder is the coin. How they know it—how they guess it, I do not know. More than once it would seem to me that intuition rather than knowledge has guided them in their plans. I say that yonder coin is bewitched and always fights for Gretzhoffen and not for us."

The chase went on, and now under such curious relations as left the three vessels of the surface, of the subsurface and of the air, drifting along, none taking the offensive.

But though the giant air craft followed close, seeming ever to hold the yacht at its mercy, it made no offensive movement; it seemed rather to shelter than to menace the fleeing vessel which steamed on so gallantly. And in the rear of both, helpless, impotent, with speed and naught but speed at its disposal, came the submarine of Cortislaw and his nobleman. Thus neither of the three could or would hurt another.

But Sachio's guess had been right. The governing influence in Gretzhoffen affairs scarce was so much reason as instinct, intuition—a woman's intuition. For he had been right—a woman was aloft, yonder with the pilot of the air craft.

"It is a curious chase, mademoiselle," said Count Frederick, turning to the companion at his side and speaking so that his voice could be heard above the loud drone of the engines. "What have we gained? What do we know?"

"Look!" said she. "Look at them below us yonder. They want what we want. They pursue what we pursue? Why? Believe me, they know that the coin is on ahead. If they know it, why shouldn't we? Monsieur le comte, your ride this morning was an inspiration. The accident of following what might have been the wake of a fish, but was the flash of a submarine—the accident of seeing yonder cloud of smoke ahead—that was fate fighting with us. Believe me, Roleau is yonder on that boat! Believe me, he has the coin. Fate is fighting with us at last, I say. The end of all our troubles is at hand."

As they swept forward, now near, now dropping off from the course of the speeding yacht, always Kitty turned her glass upon the decks of the water craft. At length she exclaimed:

"It is he! I see him. He is there standing looking back. He has no glass. He cannot recognize us now. But it is he. Ah! trust yonder faithful soul not to be traveling in vain. I am sure, as though I saw it, that he has the coin with him there. I am sure, as though I saw him, that it is Count Sachio himself in yonder submarine pursuing him. Come! Literally, we must fly."

And fly they did. Moment after moment, hour after hour, until at length the smoke above Gretzhoffen harbor thickened, until the towers of the cathedrals and the palace appeared, until the shipping grew more distinct, until the long green slope of the coast fortifications showed to the eyes of Count Frederick, high above the level of the sea.

"We will make it safely, mademoiselle," said Count Frederick, at last. "For some reason the submarine does not attack, I do not know why. The three of us soon will be within reach of our own guns. I wonder—"

The wonder of Count Frederick was not ill placed. In a few moments they heard the dull report of a 30-centimeter piece of one of the coast batteries—saw the white cloud of smoke burst from the emplacement in front of the disappearing gun. On ahead they saw the white splash of the shell across the bows of the advancing yacht.

"What do they mean?" exclaimed Count Frederick. "Ah, I see. The yatch carries the ensign of the royal navy of Grahoffen! It is armed. Our gunners take it for an enemy. Now heaven send them bad aim for once!"

A shot, and yet another followed, bracketing the yacht between the ranges. Count Frederick held his breath for what he knew would come. Come it did. The yacht, struck full by the impact of a heavy shell, reeled, careened, half broke apart and began to settle by the head.

"It is too bad!" exclaimed Count Frederick; "sunk by our own men! Yonder yacht was coming to our harbor for protection, carrying our own man—carrying our own fortune—the Gretzhoffen coin! And now all is lost!"

He turned the prow of the air craft full toward the settling yacht. The wake of the submarine was no longer visible.

Then, what the men of the Gretzhoffen batteries saw—what the men of the submarine might have seen had their periscope then been above the surface—was the swift volplane of the air craft which they so long had followed. It swept down now like a giant bird, at a keen angle, as though itself would dip into the sea. Below it there swept the great anchor rope, its end whipping white here and there on the tops of the waves.

"Ahoy, Roleau!" cried the voice of Count Frederick.

Roleau looked up at this summons from the clouds, and saw above the rail of the air craft he so long had noted in wonder two faces that he knew and loved! A great sob shook his giant chest. Even his callous soul was affected. Out of the very deep they had come—his master and his mistress—to save him, when he thought all was lost! He lifted up his hands.

The whipping rope coiled and turned, twisted this way and that. But the steady hand at the rudder of the air craft guided it straight onward, downward.

Roleau reached out, made a swift grasp, felt himself swept free, off his feet. An instant later, hand over hand, he began his ascent from what had been the extremest peril of his life.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE BROKEN COIN

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

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Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

FIFTEENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER LV.

The wide wings of the air craft rose gracefully and steadily from the perilous dip which it had made almost to the surface of the sea. Under the steady hand of the pilot it swung up and around and headed back toward the shore.

Below them now lay the towers of Gretzhoffen. The roar of the motor made conversation impossible, but the three occupants of the car looked at one another happily. Roleau, wet and weary, but smiling, had curled himself down as best he could, and accepted this last phase of his adventure with his usual philosophy.

To the relief of all three, at length they saw the green shores of Gretzhoffen waterfront rising up to meet them. The aeroplane, skillfully handled, spiraled gracefully down. Safe at length, they stepped from the car. Frederick and Kitty faced each other.

"Are we then at the end of our perils?" asked Kitty. "Dare we believe it? I am weary with it all—I scarce know whether I am not in some harassing dream. Are we then safe again?"

"Let us hope it, mademoiselle," said Count Frederick.

"But stay," said he. "How can we know what may have transpired at the palace in our absence? Only one thing is to be depended upon, and that is that Sachio will not relent. He will have some plot on foot—he will not admit his defeat."

"Let us go then," said Count Frederick, "and see. After what we have endured why trouble overmuch regarding what fate may have in addition? It all seems to me to have been in the hand of fate itself. Even I am of the mind that our little fears do not in the least alter the plans of the gods regarding us."

"That is the fatalism of a brave man," said Kitty, smiling.

"What! Then you call me at least brave, mademoiselle? Would that I might find some other merit in your eyes—and would I might blot out my own sense of unworthiness in the conduct I have shown towards you. Mademoiselle—"

"This is no time for such matters, monsieur. Let us hasten." She spoke composedly, and even then was turning toward the palace.

Roleau, apart at a respectful distance, for the time made no attempt to intrude. Count Frederick and Kitty hurried off toward the plaza in front of the palace, whose grounds so recently had been the scene of the desperate encounter between the two armies. A certain peace had reigned there but now, yet it had been but the peace of exhaustion. The army of Grahoffen had withdrawn, that was true, but led by dauntless minds its retreat had been checked. With them defeat was but a relative term, a temporary condition. Even now they had summoned up their courage, and those but recently vanquished had set on foot a counter-attack against the capital of their recently victorious foe.

As they advanced they found the plaza once more filled with armed men, the forces of Grahoffen again upon the aggressive. By stealth now, rapidly and without the sound of martial music, they had stolen into the unguarded portion of the city. The courage of despair perhaps animated them in this undertaking. Yet now confidence and not despair seemed to rule among them as they gathered in front of the palace which still so grimly held its ancient secrets.

"Come quick!" exclaimed Frederick as this scene broke upon their gaze. "We are alone—our forces are scattered—they are upon us again in thousands. We must take refuge in the palace—only in its hidden recesses can we find any help now."

Carefully as might be, and as quickly, they gained access once more to the beleaguered palace of Gretzhoffen. In the anteroom they met none less than Michael, the puppet king himself. He was the image of terror now, and willing to babble to any of his woes.

"What shall we do? Where shall we go?" he exclaimed almost in despair. "They are at us again—they have no mercy on us—they do not stay defeated, my dear count. Yonder Sachio does not relent—he will have our hearts' blood. It is terrible. Where shall we fly from him?"

Much of these broken utterances had truth in them. The Grahoffen troops were indeed in possession of the central defenses of the town. By virtue of the magic of persistence and speed of action Count Sachio himself once more had won to the head of his troops. From some place unknown to them he reappeared, the man in whom they had confidence, and the man who had confidence in himself. With such an adversary King Michael, or even the stouter soul now at his side, might well find pause.

"Soon it will be indeed too late, your majesty," exclaimed Count Frederick. "Come—we must find some safety in the inner chambers of the palace. Luckily it was built for precisely such a crisis as this in its fate. Come, mademoiselle, your hand, quick. Your majesty, it is not beneath your dignity to hasten now."

Pursued by vague noises of combat and by countless vague fears conjured up by their surroundings, deep in the hidden fastnesses, they went on until at length they were far below the level of the rooms devoted to the usual puposes of the daily life of the palace. Below them, before them, all was darkness and gloom. They were well among the subterranean dungeons which had held so long their secrets against all comers.

Michael was the prey of yet added apprehensions as he found himself thus leaving the light of day and venturing among these regions whose traditions held them so potent in terror for the human mind as once they had offered terrors to the human body. Yet he could do no more than follow the guidance of the bolder mind which now led on.

They were followed in some part by the refugees of the palace, as anxious as themselves to find some refuge. So at length they halted in an abiding place which for the time at least was silent—a deep dungeon where light and sound alike were cut off. Such had been their haste that all were well-nigh exhausted—Michael spent most of all and voicing most of all the babbling of his mortal anguish. Thus circumstanced, they found such places of rest as offered and waited for what might come.

Meanwhile the relentless Sachio was searching some entrance into the palace, the hiding place of his enemies, and, as he supposed, also of the woman whom gladly he would have called his friend—the woman whom he feared most of all.

"Break in the door, men," he cried. "Smash in any window. Enter, in the name of our own king. We have them defeated now, and they must not escape—they are trapped here, and we will soon have them in our hands."

His men obeyed. There came soon the splintering of wood, the crashing of glass at the palace windows. Before many moments had passed the legions of Grahoffen were pouring through the breach and overrunning the interior of the palace. Sachio, with some hurried instructions to an aide, led on the advance. All through the upper portion of the palace the echo of hurrying footsteps resounded.

"They are coming," said Kitty at length quietly to her companions. They have taken the palace. We cannot escape. This must be the end. They will have us out now at any cost."

"What shall we do? Where shall we hide? What will become of me?" wailed Michael. "Save me, Frederick, save me. What shall I do?"

"You shall keep silent, your majesty, if you please. You can go nowhere better than this. I will do what I can," rejoined Frederick. "Most beloved majesty, you are in a hard case, but pray you, trouble us not too much in the work of doing what we can for your majesty and ourselves."

Trying now this door, now that, advancing, receding, the men of Grahoffen came on. They filled up the corridors, all the reception halls of the front and rear of the Gretzhoffen palace. Count Sachio, his king, his leaders and their soldiers—all now joined in the last dash upon what they thought to be the finish of their enemy's last citadel.

Aloof and apart, concealed for the time in the remote cell which had received them, Count Frederick and his companions hoped against hope for yet a little while, but hoped in vain. Again came the crashing of doors, the rush of feet on the stone floors. Useless to contend against their numbers—the last door was broken through. Discovered, surrounded, trapped, Count Frederick and his companions faced their assailants.

"So," laughed Sachio, as he stood panting but triumphant, after his last attack. "So, at last! You have run far, my friends, and dodged us very nimbly. Where shall you go now, my good count—where shall you go, my pretty one—and you, your august majesty of Gretzhoffen, before whom I must tremble—what is the next place of retreat for you?"

His taunt had truth under it. The last card seemed to have been played, and played to an awful loss. There seemed to be no further retreat; the little resistance which Frederick and Kitty could offer would serve for naught against such odds; as best they might they endeavored to protect their king, who cowered in a corner of the room, half moaning in helpless terror.

"And yet now, at the last instant, it was Count Frederick himself to whom it was given to devise a plan, desperate in itself, yet, as it chanced, effective.

His eyes fell upon a great wheel, rusty and long disused, which thrust out of one corner of the room. As he saw it his gaze kindled with the sudden thought which it suggested. He knew what it was and what it meant—what hope it offered now.

"Keep them talking," he whispered to Kitty, in a quick aside. "Engage them for just a moment—keep them busy—wait."

Count Frederick knew that this wheel and the levers beyond controlled the drainage outlet of the great moat which surrounded the rear portion of the castle. Those lower gates once opened, there was nothing to prevent flooding of the subterranean passages. The moat waters had been used for that very purpose in the past—so ran tradition—and great had been the slaughter wrought upon ancient enemies of Gretzhoffen through that very means. Here they were living in the past—here they demanded of the past its secrets—here they were surrounded by all the grim memorials of the past. Why, then, thought Count Frederick, why not use that past and the means that once had been sufficient to it?

He laid his hand upon the wheel. It had not yielded to an arm less powerful than his, and even his strength was necessary to its limit before he could force it to yield, long disused as it had been here. But at length it did turn a little, and then more and yet more.

The result was beyond all calculation. There came the sound of rippling, and then of rushing waters. It came in the passages back of the invaders. It filled the stone floors along the corridors. It lapped their feet. It bathed their ankles. It rose swiftly to their knees. And then consternation seized upon all those who but now had stood triumphant, taunting, menacing. Of a truth, the trapped creatures had turned and wrought their own vengeance.

"Quick, get to safety," commanded Frederick now. And even as he and his companions found a little higher level in another chamber whence they could see the work of the waters on their foes, those foes themselves began to cry out in terror at the mysterious enemy against which they could not battle.

"Your Majesty," exclaimed Count Sachio now to the tall figure at his side—"your majesty!"

King Cortislaw it was who had been summoned to see the last struggles of his adversary. He stood now trapped like the meanest of these retainers about him, and neither could find hope.

"The wheel, the wheel," called Sachio at length. "Stop him, men—he is opening the water gates—stop him at once."

Himself and a few men endeavored to go at Frederick, but met the irate Kitty, who put up a tigerlike resistance to protect her comrade at his work. The sound of shots came, the mingled sounds of much confused lamentation from those now threatened with drowning in these deep subterranean passages.

"What," exclaimed Cortislaw to Sachio, "is it my fate to drown like a rat here in their palace? Quick, Sachio, offer them peace—offer them treaty."

Even the sense of chagrin was lost to Sachio now in his terror for his life and that of his sovereign. He advanced through the water as best he might until he caught the attention of Frederick, still busy at his task.

"Halt, Count Frederick," he cried. "Wait—we offer parley—we offer a truce—we offer you peace, if so you will protect the life of our sovereign."

"So then," exclaimed Frederick, "your sovereign is here?"

"I admit he is," said Sachio. "I admit also that you have the upper hand of us once more. We cannot perish like so much vermin here—stop your cursed wheel and give us respite, or soon it will be too late."

"Are you sincere, Count Sachio?" demanded Frederick—"may we believe your word? We have had cause to doubt it more than once."

"Doubt it then no more. Cut off these floods which are drowning us inch by inch, and we will leave your palace and leave the town. I give you my word and that of my sovereign."

"Why, then," said Count Frederick, smiling, "agreed, and very cheerfully. We do not want you to cumber our corridors with your dead. Let it be peace then, and this time let your word be kept. Begone then, and thank good fortune, and not your just deserts, that you have life left for you. If any of you remains death shall be his fate at once. Decide quickly, my good Sachio. You have not long to live. The moat waters are not yet touched—they will flood these channels in the rock to their very roofs. Decide then."

"Enough, enough," cried Sachio, holding up his hands. "We submit—we surrender—we agree."

Count Frederick reversed the wheel. Little by little, the gurgling and rushing of the waters ceased. They reached their own level again. Once more the old moat was locked, and once more a drawn battle had been fought over that secret which still remained hidden deep somewhere in those rock caverns.

Little by little, slowly and in deep humiliation, the forces of Grahoffen found their way out as best they might—or at least most of them did, including Sachio and Cortislaw, his king.

Presently Frederick, Kitty and King Michael were alone once more, rescued as much by fate, by chance, as by their own wits—keen as those had been.

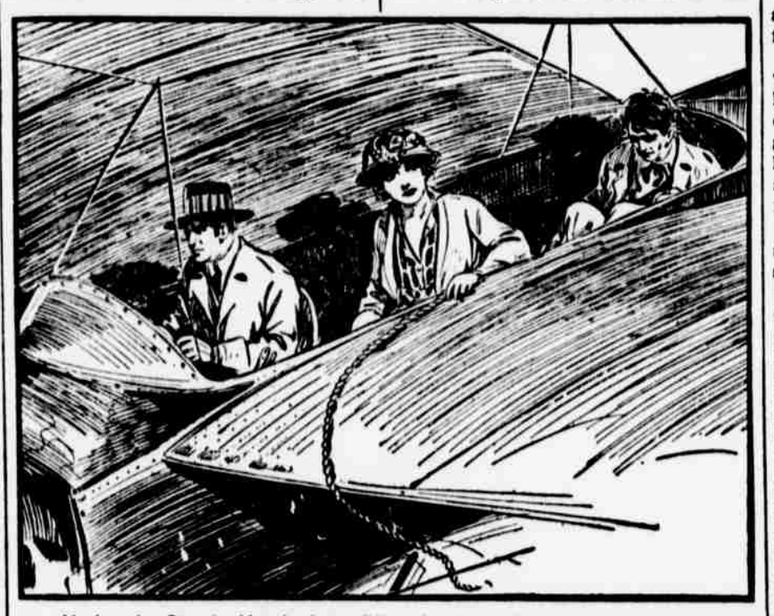
"So, your majesty," said Count Frederick to King Michael, "where there is will there is way—it seems the proverb is proved true once more. We were not far alike from death and burial here ourselves. Had our friends the enemies remained much longer, we would have taken toll of them to the last man. 'Twas lucky, my recollection of the old tradition about the wheel and the water gates.

"But come now, perhaps your majesty will rest," said he in conclusion. "I think we shall now have better opportunity to do so. Unless I am now far mistaken, our friends of Grahoffen will leave us. Not only with fire and sword, but with the waters under the earth, we have smitten them.

"As for you, mademoiselle," said he when at length they had escorted the monarch to a place of greater safety, "I congratulate you also on the escape. You aided handsomely as ever. But for your courage we could not have succeeded."

"It was nothing," said Kitty. "The trapped animal fights desperately."

"It is of no importance," said Count Frederick calmly. A peril passed is passed, and need give us no more concern. But stay, there was some unfinished business between you and me, mademoiselle. Tell me, why should we be enemies still, since we have learned to fight shoulder to shoulder against the enemies of our city? We have been together in more than one peril—we have well-nigh perished together a score of times—and together we have avenged ourselves. Do you find no augury in that? Soldiers who fight together and who win to safety together usually are friends—why should not we be friends?"



Under the Steady Hand of the Pilot the Aircraft Headed for Shore.

He advanced toward her now, his arms extended, in his face all his awakened passion as he saw her once more so close at his side.

"What!" exclaimed Kitty, pushing him back. "Surrender—you ask me to surrender! Why should I? We are but now out of a situation which leaves me disposed for anything but light matters. Why should I think of you at all, monsieur le comte, who have been indeed the cause of so many of these perils which you mention now. Until I find the missing half of my coin I have another mission in life, and other matters to consider, than to talk of such things as these you now suggest."

She turned from him. He stood looking after her, baffled and unhappy, smiling sadly as he saw her go.

"One time, mademoiselle," said he to himself—"some day! Tomorrow may bring another day—"

CHAPTER LVI.

King Cortislaw, safe at last from the danger he had encountered in the subterranean passageways of the palace, was greeted with cheers by his men when at length he emerged. Surrounded by his soldiers and his officers, he passed out in retreat from the scene which but now had been a triumph for his arms.

His officers attended him—all save one. Count Sachio, indomitable even in defeat, lingered for just a time behind the others in the escape from the submerged passages. Hurrying here and there, he sought as best he might, unguided, for that ancient torture chamber somewhere below the palace, in which, as he knew, there rested the secret of Gretzhoffen. But since he was unguided, how could he know when at length he was close to the door which barred him from that secret?

He did find a closed door, in a part of the subterranean chambers not yet flooded by the waters of the moat. He could not find entrance—the door was locked—he had no time to seek for any key. Looking about him hastily, he saw only upon the floor a scrap of paper, an old, stained, charred, dismembered piece of parchment, left there by whose hand he could not guess. Curiously regarding it, he picked it up to examine it more closely. It bore some ancient inscription which he could but ill decipher—an inscription in Latin. Count Sachio cudgeled his wits to bring to his aid such store of knowledge of dead languages as once was his in his college days. Hurried as he was, and disjointed as the inscription was, he could make but little of it.

"By the rood," exclaimed he, "here is something strange enough—a parchment from God knows where, by God knows whom. It says something about a king or an heir to a kingdom—it says something about an abduction. Why, here we come upon a pretty story. I'll warrant half my chance of reward in this war this paper has something to do with the secret of Gretzhoffen. At least I will take it with me."

He thrust it into his pocket and hurried on into the open to join his fleeing comrades. Even as those left behind in the palace began to take counsel of restoring some order after the ruin which had been wrought, Count Sachio, in possession of one more unfinished secret, was outside the walls.

As he passed from the front of the palace, he came directly in the line of vision of Kitty, who was watching the retreat of the Grahoffen forces. Something in Sachio's haste, his air of uncertainty withal, attracted her attention.

"I'm sure," said she to herself, "there is some mischief in his mind. As a rule it has been safe to follow yonder rascal—I will do so now." And that she did.

Sachio hastened out through the palace grounds, bound for some path which without question was familiar to him, and which now he fancied would offer him quick egress from a situation so lacking in attractions.

In Sachio's mind was but one thought. He was cogitating even as he fled upon the contents of the paper in his pocket. Half he drew it out as he hastened. "A king," said he—"abducted; who was he? What was his age—what king? 'Tis indeed a cunning plot to vex my soul yet further"

In Kitty's mind, as she followed him with her eyes, and presently followed him in person, there was no inkling of this problem which was troubling good Count Sachio. What concerned her was some indefinite feeling that she must keep him in sight. Once more her instinct proved of service.

Count Sachio passed among the shrubbery of the place, eager to find such shelter as he might—concealment which would offer him safety and an opportunity to examine yet more thoroughly this curious bit of paper which he had safe in his pocket. He thrust this way and that. A button of his coat entangled in the branch of a shrub. He detached it hastily and passed on. As he did so, he did not notice that his cherished bit of paper left his pocket and fell upon the ground. Trust eyes as keen as Kitty's to note this incident of his flight. An instant later she had pounced upon it and was herself hurrying for concealment. Once more her wits were at sword's point with those of the doughtiest of her foes.

Kitty herself, glancing hastily at that paper, could make no more of it than had Sachio. "What can it mean?" thought she. But whatever it meant, of one thing she was sure—Count Sachio would return for it.

She had not long to wait to find this suspicion confirmed. Soon she heard him hurrying back—saw him bending over the place where he last had been sure of the possession of the paper—saw him look about here and there hastily, hurriedly, eagerly. Now indeed she was confirmed in her own suspicions.

"Aha, Count Sachio," said she to herself, "once more I have something which you covet."

She had occasion to find once more that the possession of something Count Sachio coveted carried with it a certain danger to the possessor.

Looking this way and that for some place of safety, Kitty saw a thickly-branching tree which to her notion might offer a shelter. Without hesitation she climbed up hand over hand, the paper with her, and sought such concealment as she could in the branches. From this place of vantage she could look down and cover the country to some distance. She could see therefore a little guard of Grahoffen soldiers who were returning, hunting evidently for their leader, Count Sachio. A moment later and they had met.

"It was here," said Sachio—"but here I dropped it. It must have been taken—someone has followed me—someone is concealed not far from here. Come, men, we must search. 'Twas a bit of paper—of no value to any but me, but I must have it, do you hear?"

Like some hounds questing for the scent they scattered here and there among the trees. It was left for Count Sachio himself to discover Kitty's hiding place. He stood laughing as he looked up.

"What, mademoiselle, soon you do me the honor to follow me—perhaps you did me the honor to take into possession something of my property. Prithee—come down, my dear."

"I will not," rejoined Kitty—"if I choose to stay here 'tis none of your business."

The dark flush of anger came to Count Sachio's swarthy features.

"Listen, my sweeting," said he, "I have no time to waste words with you or anyone. You have what is mine, and what I want. Come down—you must—either alive or dead. One day you will find that Count Sachio is not one with whom you can idly trifle. Quick now, the paper."

Pale and terrified, for a moment almost unnerved, the unhappy girl made no answer.

"Ready, guards," commanded Sachio to his men. "Take aim. You, there—drag her out of yonder tree."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

TELLS OF PREHISTORIC EGYPT

Lecturer at the British Museum Describes Face Paint Found in Ancient Graves.

Mr. Handcock has just delivered a lecture on prehistoric Egypt at the British museum, the first of a course of four lectures.

After a detailed discussion of the dynastic Egyptians on the one hand and the prehistoric aborigines on the other, in the course of which he showed a large number of ivory, slate, bone and clay figurines recovered from early Egyptian graves, together with a number of skulls, he proceeded to examine some early ceremonial slate palettes, which are illustrative of the fauna of the country at that period, as well as of the artist's skill.

These palettes were used for toilet purposes, the malachite which was used for face paint being ground upon them, and it is interesting to note that traces of paint are still visible on some of them.

They are of further importance, inasmuch as they illustrate pictorially the traditional conquest of the North by the South prior to the unification of all Egypt under one monarch, the legendary Mona, one whose historical counterparts would appear to have been Aha-Men.

The early predynastic Egyptians were Neolithic, and the flints of their workmanship are the finest wrought flints in the world, but later on copper came unto use.

The Semitic element in the Egyptian language proves conclusively that there was a Semitic element in the blood of the dynastic Egyptians, but this fact does not seem to have much bearing on the connection between the early Egyptian and Babylonian civilization as illustrated by the use of cylinder seals and similar shaped mace heads in both countries in the very earliest times, for at the period in question the Sumerians and not the Semites were in all probability the ruling factors in Babylonian civilization. Mr. Handcock concluded his lecture with some remarks on the paintings on early Egyptian pottery, which showed that they knew how to build and navigate sailing boats as well as rowing boats from the earliest times.

Art of Japan.

A certain fastidiousness, a certain love of scrupulous and cleanly order, belongs to the Japanese character; we find it in their manners, their habits, their furniture, in all their workmanship. The word exquisite, so often vaguely misapplied, is an epithet truly applicable to the art of Japan. The faults of this character are a tendency to the smallness which often goes with neatness. The Japanese do not work under the pressure of abundant ideas and torrential emotions; they do not fall into the excessive extravagance which sometimes besets the Chinese. But their unfailing sense of style compensates in great measure for their lack of more genial exuberance. Taste with them, as with artists like Velasquez and Whistler, becomes no mere negative avoidance. One might well compare the Japanese genius in some aspects with the Latin genius, as it is shown in much of the poetry of the Romans and of the French, where a telling economy of words and fineness of handling are made to compensate for a slightness or even complete absence of matter.—Laurence Binyon, in the Atlantic.

Safe Servers of the Race.

Brilliant! There is safety in mediocrity. Brilliant men and women are always carried away by their ambitions, for which they will sacrifice everything. A dray horse for a long pull and a race horse for a spurt. A plodder to solve problems and the venturesome to try their fortunes with fate. The statesmen whose names survive and whose achievements make splendid pages in recorded history were the careful, earnest, studious men of affairs—not the comets that shot across the sky, nor the skyrockets that leaped high into the air, leaving a trail of sparks and a stick that fell to the ground.—Leslie's.

Not Concerned With Him.

Bill Nye used to tell this story of the late Myron W. Reed of Denver: Reed was a bright and original preacher, and many curious people came to hear him. Once a man from the Gunnison country arrived at his church rather late Sunday morning while Reed was making a low but earnest prayer. "Louder," yelled the late comer. Mr. Reed ceased his prayer for a moment, looked at the gentleman from over the range, and said: "My friend, I wasn't speaking to you; I was addressing God."

The Broken Coin

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by Grace Cunard

(Copyright, 1915, By Wright A. Patterson)

Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

SIXTEENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER LVII.

A Tartar Taken.

"Enfin, mademoiselle!" exclaimed Sachio, with the smile which Kitty Gray so well learned how to hate as well as dread. "At last! You are difficult, but as the maxim makers have it, perseverance at length wins its own reward."

"Well, then," she began, facing him, at bay, her hands clenched, her eyes flashing. "What is it that you wish?"

"Ah, well, many things, my dear," said Sachio, coolly. "But especially I desire all the knowledge you have of the affairs of this distracted kingdom here. There is more than one secret here—yes? It has a broken coin and a broken parchment as well—yes? Together they may mean something, each for the other—yes? And we—I—all of us who are sworn to advance the interest of our kingdom—we need them both—all. Is it not true?"

He felt in his pocket for his silver cigarette case, and would have served himself. As he opened the case the girl made a sudden spring. His hand dropped the little case and caught her by the arm.

"Tut, tut, now!" he said. "Do not be foolish. I may as well say it—you are going once more with us to our own town, the city of Grahoffen."

She could only stamp her foot, too much enraged to speak. But he went on.

"I am thinking you will not so soon make your escape the next time. We have seen that Gretzhoffen here has deep dungeons—yes? Grahoffen has others quite as deep.

"Take her, men!" he said, "and quick. We must march."

"Ah, well," said Kitty Gray, "it should not prove so difficult. I am unarmed and a woman—I am helpless and innocent of any wrong against you."

"Mademoiselle," said Sachio, "it is idle to waste words. Give over to me the piece of parchment which I know you have."

"I will not," said she calmly.

"Search her, men!" said Sachio. "Take away from her what she has—be careful not to tear it more."

She was helpless and realized it. Slowly she drew from her bosom the folded piece of parchment which she had concealed.

"Well, then," said she, "since you resort to such measures, here it is—I do not deny it. I found it. So did you. At least it is as much mine as yours—and more mine, because I did not lose what once I found. But as to what it means, I know nothing. I never saw it before."

"Very well, then," said Sachio. "We will see if we can read its additional riddle at some later time. Now we must go."

In the confusion of the hour, therefore, Kitty Gray vanished and none noted the fashion of her disappearance, for all had matters enough to occupy them fully. Count Frederick alone of all those with whom she lately had spoken missed her, and began search for her. He got no word in any portion of the palace which had been frequented by her as guest or prisoner.

Troubled deeply, Count Frederick once more turned to his own home. Here he made urgent inquiries among his people in the vague hope that once more the young woman whom he sought had for reasons of her own found her way back to a place where she had more than once ventured in the past. But not one of his servants could furnish any knowledge whatsoever. They had not seen her, knew nothing of her presence.

Count Frederick called to him one of his most trusted men.

"Listen," said he. "You know the young American—the one of a certain prominence in the court—the one who has been here as my guest?"

"Yes, excellency," replied the man impassively.

"Very well. She has disappeared. It is my wish that you discover her for me as soon as possible—at once."

Having taken these measures, possibly inefficient, yet the only ones offering to his mind, Count Frederick himself hurried once more to the royal palace.

It was, as so often is the case, a small thing which changed the course of greater resolutions. As he crossed the palace grounds so lately the scene of armed combat, he noted the trampled sward, the torn bed of flowers, the broken shrubs, the shorn trees—all the marks of rifle and artillery fire. Here there lay the debris of the attack and the retreat—arms, equipment. The keen eye of Frederick noted them all. It noted also the glitter of a bit of metal which seemed not a portion of discarded accouterments. He stopped and picked it up.

It was a silver cigarette case, evidently of value and evidently abandoned by some of the Grahoffen forces who so recently had left the place. Count Frederick examined it curiously, opened it.

Within the lid there was written a little inscription which gave him a start. "To Count Sachio, our well beloved, for deeds of valor. From his king."

"So," exclaimed Frederick, "so then—so then! He was here but now. And look—" Not far away he saw the prints of sharp-heeled boots in the broken soil. He caught up a little bit of filmy lace—a kerchief whose perfume was familiar to him. He saw against the bark of a nearby tree a fragment of like lace, torn perhaps in some struggle.

"Yes, she was here."

Agitated, he hastened once more now to the palace door. He demanded of all whom he met where last they had seen the young American, but they could give no intelligent replies.

"Let me tell you, then," said Count Frederick in a flash of anger, "since you cannot learn for me. She has gone to Grahoffen—as a prisoner. Go there then, follow Sachio, as I have already ordered. The young American without question has been taken prisoner. We must rescue her. We must do that for every reason in the world—for her own safety and our own—

"And for my own peace of mind," he added sotto voce, as, haggard, he turned away to find such relief as he could in the countless duties which now were to devolve upon him amid the wreck of a government and the ruin of a city.

Although the forces of the king of Grahoffen had been worsted in strategy and had given their parole in order to save their lives in the flooded chambers of the dungeon levels, the kingdom itself, its ruler and its leading men seemed to feel little of the terror common with those actually defeated. Upon the contrary, old Cortislaw and his nobles were victims not so much of terror as chagrin. Neither were they disposed too scrupulously to observe their own plighted word, which had purchased life and liberty. Passing from the limits of the beleaguered capitol, they did not scorn to take such loot as lay at hand, or to carry with them such prisoners as pleased them. Among these latter it chanced that they had one more prisoner whose freedom might much have altered the course of events in this complex little drama.

Had Roleau, the doughty servant of Kitty Gray, been on hand at the time of the capitulation of the Grahoffen forces, no doubt he would have kept so close to his mistress as to guard against any such sudden surprise as had now left her at the mercy of her enemies. But Roleau, prisoner to Grahoffen, had no knowledge of any of the late stirring events, nor any knowledge of the whereabouts of his mistress.

The windows of the cell in which Roleau had been confined faced upon the corridor sometimes used by the retainers of the palace, less frequently by those persons of greater importance. Roleau heard footsteps now, voices, the confusion of a large party arriving. He stepped close to the bars of his cell, pressed his face out, so that he might see. Upon his features any who had observed must have seen joy, exultation. For, though himself a prisoner, Roleau had seen now, down below there, the form of that mistress whom he served!

But Roleau was wise. He did not cry out. He did not shout in sudden greeting, as she passed among his captors. Only he stood close and hoped that she would look up.

She did look up, and saw him standing there, and guessed his reason for silence—saw his sudden finger on lip demanding silence from herself as well. A flash of intelligence passed once more between the two.

"Well, well, my pretty one," taunted Sachio. "Welcome once more to our portals; and may you bide with us longer this time than last."

"We shall see," was her retort.

Sachio did not answer, but grimly led her on into the presence of King Cortislaw himself. Cortislaw was still furious in his chagrin at the defeat of his plans.

"So, again, mademoiselle!" said he, and his gray beard curled in his evil smile. "We have you once more. Believe us, it is the last time. You shall not escape again. Why is she here, Sachio?" he demanded—"How did you take her?"

"I found her as an angel disdaining the earth, your majesty," laughed Sachio, "spurning the ground—in short, safe, as she supposed, high in the branches of a tree! We pulled her out of that, and found in her possession something I had lost—this parchment, your majesty."

Cortislaw examined it curiously. "What, another half-told tale?" said he—"'tis torn across."

"Yes," assented Sachio, "it is a mystery like that of the broken coin. If my Latin serves me, it says something of a lost prince."

"You are very faithful, Sachio," said Cortislaw. "You are very faithful, and very efficient. What do you say, mademoiselle?"

"I say nothing," rejoined Kitty Gray, and stood defiant.

Count Sachio spoke for her. "I am persuaded from the way she comports herself, your majesty, that she knows more than she pretends about this inscription here."

"So, then, you undertake to be obdurate?" The eye of Cortislaw was fixed on her with its cold menace.

"I am not obdurate, but I stand upon my rights," she went on. "I have not both the halves of the coin, and if I had I would not give you either. As to this inscription, I know nothing of it—this is the first time I have seen it."

"Take her away, men," said Sachio. "Keep her under guard. We will call you when we need you."

The door of the great reception hall closed now upon Kitty Gray, prisoner once again in Grahoffen towers.

"Well, what think you, Sachio?" said Cortislaw, turning at length to his officer. "She speaks with boldness."

"Yes, and always has," assented Sachio, musingly. "What is the secret of her courage? She seems to have no fear whatever for us."

"Listen, Sachio," said he. "We have made acquaintance with that young woman before, and have got no profit from the meeting. She is too mysterious, and she makes us too much trouble. Were there certain to be a reward for that, very well, but what reward may we hope? We dare not torture the truth from her, as once the king of this country would have done. Since she will not talk, and since we cannot compel her to talk, why, let us cast her into the discard as of no use to us."

"What is it your majesty means?" inquired the nobleman.

"Why should we trade in such small deer as this after all?" said Cortislaw. "We may well lose all our time and have only additional trouble for our pains. Certainly there are enough things to do. As for these larger troubles which she threatens—might we not well have a care? Well, then, let her have her way. Let us send her back to that country of which she talks—let us send her back whether she wishes to go or not!"

"As your majesty wishes," said Sachio gravely.

"Coome to me within the hour, Sachio," said Cortislaw, turning away. "Bring me the plan by which we can send her out of our country. Let it be soon, and good riddance of the vixen as well."

"It shall be as you say, your majesty," said Sachio.

CHAPTER LVIII.

Travel Incognito.

Roleau paced his narrow cage like some restless wild beast, some half-formed plan in his mind. The time was at hand for his guards to bring him his midday food. He heard them approaching before long, four of them, all careless, singing some ribald ditty of the line and trench. He saw them open his door and enter, putting down the basin which held his meager prison fare. It was enough! The door of the cell was open.

With a leap and a snarl of rage the powerful man was upon the guards, striking, wrestling, assailing here and there with such violence and such skill that soon the four were much at his mercy, taken altogether by surprise as they had been. Once more boldness had proved successful. An instant and Roleau was past them, beyond the door, and in the hall before their scattered senses had time to realize what had happened.

As he fled, Roleau had no plan beyond that of mere flight. But it chanced that he reached the outer corridor just as Kitty's guards were bringing her into it. He fell likewise upon Kitty's guards with such desperate valor that before long they, too, were scattered and helpless. A moment later Kitty and Roleau fled, seeking some exit from the palace walls.

The hue and cry followed them now. Almost they had escaped, but not quite. Even at the great door of the palace itself they were apprehended by yet other armed men. Once more they were brought before the king.

"So it seems we have two incorrigibles," commented that monarch coldly as he faced Roleau and Kitty, still panting. "This man, as you know, Sachio, is far more dangerous than his accomplice here. She is dangerous, yes, in a way, but this man has hesitated at nothing—not even murder. What shall we do with him?"

Sachio stood also regarding the two. "I'll tell you, your majesty," said he at length, slowly, "if you ask me my own feeling in the matter. Let us send them out of the country together. They have a way of gravitating together—let them go together to that America of which they talk so much. Let them find the protection of that Uncle Sam of whom they prate."

"Away with them!" command Cortislaw, imperiously.

Sachio therefore now had his task. But how to achieve it was his question. He knew well enough he could not oblige either Kitty or Roleau to book passage across the ocean unless they so desired.

"Attend to these two, lieutenant," said he to the officer of the guard. "Keep them safe until I return."

He hastened now as rapidly as he might to the water front, where at the somewhat restricted docks of Grahoffen an occasional ocean liner touched.

"You Shall Have Some Time to Reflect on the Expediency of Being More Complaisant."

He knew of such an instance now—a vessel of sorts was lying loaded and almost ready to sail. Perhaps chance would favor him.

He made his way across the crowded docks to the gangway of the steamer; but he sought no converse with the captain or the purser of the ship. Instead he beckoned to him one or two deck stewards, whom he selected after a quick look as countrymen of a land he knew.

"See here, my good men," said he when he had them aside. "As I fancy, we are all interested in making money—is it not true?"

A grin made the answer of the two sailors, who stood expecting some gratuity.

The gratuity came—it fell into their hands—in gold—and in large pieces! They stood dumfounded and speechless for the moment, but Sachio went on:

"Listen, men," said he. "There are two spies here in the city, a man and a young woman. They are dangerous to our country. They are our prisoners—we took them in the assault on Gretzhoffen in the recent war between these two countries. They are both Americans. I know how much your country loves Americans—you can guess how much I love them."

"True, true," said one of the men. "That is right. We know them—those Americans!"

"Precisely," resumed the nobleman. "Now, we must get these spies out of this country secretly. They refuse to take passage. Very well—we will book it for them then. And see, I pay you the passage money instead of paying it to the ship's purser. Somewhere in the hold you could watch them, could you not, men? None will be the wiser, and you will be the richer. What then, my hearties?"

His hearties hesitated for a moment, but at length agreed with him. "Why then," said the spokesman. "I suppose"—and once more they looked at the gold pieces in their hands.

"There is not the least danger in the world about it," said the strange man who had thus accosted them. "You are committing no crime, but are doing this country a service. These two spies will be brought here to the dock just before the ship sails. There is some confusion—but they get aboard—they are hoisted from the dock into the hold, where they will be safe. Very good, the vessel sails. She is at sea one day, two days. Then all at once there is hue and cry—stowaways discovered—two of them. Very well, that is all. They tell their story, but the captain of the ship thinks them to be stowaways, and nothing else. They have the look of such. As such they will be landed in due time—at New York. Their passage money is paid not to the ship but to you yourselves—more than you would make for six months' wages. And besides that, you have done a good service to our country, which is far more friendly to your own, my hearties, than that America to which these spies must be deported. What say you, then? It is a bargain?"

It seemed that it was to be a bargain.

CHAPTER LXX.

A Broken Voyage.

Alone in his palace, Count Frederick paced up and down, engrossed in futile plans. After many hours, an attendant announced the arrival of one of the emissaries he had sent to follow Count Sachio.

"Excellency," began his servant agitatedly—"quick, or we shall be too late."

"What now—why too late—what has happened? Tell me, men!" Count Frederick was none too gentle in his moods of anger.

"They have taken her prisoner—they plot to ship her away today—toinght—now, for all I know!"

"What are you saying, man? But you found her, then?"

"Found where she is, or was. As you suspected, she was taken prisoner by Count Sachio and carried to Grahoffen. I followed him. He went to the docks and bargained there with some fellows of an ocean steamer due to sail within an hour or so. I heard them agree to take over a prisoner, a woman—another prisoner, a man. Count Sachio said he would deliver them just before the vessel sailed. They were to be hid in the hold and discovered later as stowaways too late for return."

"Quick, men." He turned now to his assistants. "Hasten to the shipping offices on our own dock. Have them make ready a boat to carry my message to the captain of the royal yacht. Tell him to make ready to sail at once on my arrival—and to expect a race with an ocean liner."

A few moments later he was at the dock and, hurrying into the small boat which lay awaiting, was carried swiftly to the side of the royal yacht, on whose decks already there was evidence of the orderly confusion of a boat about to get under way. Evidently his message to the captain of the yacht had been received.

"Come on board, sir!" said Count Frederick, as the captain met him at the ladder. "You understand?"

"Your servant, Count Frederick," said the commander. "I know you well. Command us."

"Under way at once then, captain," said Count Frederick. "Lay a course to the foot of the bay. The vessel we must search has perhaps even now sailed from Grahoffen port. It is our duty in the name of the king to intercept her. They have on board prisoners of our own people—there has been treachery done by Sachio, leader of Grahoffen."

An instant, and the jangle of the engine-room bells made sweet music to Count Frederick's ears. At least now there would be action, at least suspense would be at an end.

The speedy yacht ripped through the water as though conscious itself of its imperative duty. Ere long they had passed the lower headlands of the Gretzhoffen harbor. Eagerly Frederick scanned the levels of the sea as they opened before him. At last an exclamation escaped his lips. A long and heavy cloud of smoke lay on the horizon, the trail of a great ship making for open sea.

"Captain, there she goes! A thousand napoleons if you lay us alongside—dishonor if you fail to do so." And the captain nodded.

Meantime what was the secret that the distant liner was carrying with her? None save those aboard could tell that, and of these but two or three rude deck men. The bought agents of Sachio had done their work well. None on the ship save those interested had noticed when two bundles, trussed up and concealed in heavy coverings, had been hoisted aboard by the ship's donkey engine and dropped into the hold. Yet in this way two human beings were loaded as cattle, without the knowledge of the ship's officers.

When Kitty Gray recovered her senses she found herself in a dark and noisome hole, she knew not where. Terror smote her. Her pulses refused to work, her mind rebelled.

Above she heard tramplings, shoutings, the creaking of tackle, the sound of machinery muffled by intervening walls of the ship's structure. At last she thought she heard the swash of water alongside. What did this mean—was this the sea? Was she a prisoner to be handled in some new and mystifying way? What did it all mean?

A faint light came from nigh above, where the hatchway yet remained open. She saw it all now—she was in a ship's hold, and beyond all aid. She called out, but got no answer. Exhausted by her fruitless efforts, at last she flung herself down upon a nearby bundle—and stared up again with a shriek of terror!

The bundle beneath her had stirred—moved—yes, she was sure of that! It moved again. Terrified as she was, she stooped and cut the thongs which bound the neck of the long bag of jute.

There appeared to her gaze the tousled head and livid face of her friend Roleau! Without her knowledge he had been hoisted in with her and left to live or die, as he chose, bound tight in a bag which gave him little enough chance for air.

Kitty gave a cry of delight and dismay mingled as she bent above her friend. He was half unconscious, unable to speak, because tightly gagged. She aided him and freed him as she might. The air, bad as it was, presently began to revive the sufferer.

"Excellency," said he at last, "excellency, it is you! And where are we?"

"I do not know, Roleau," said she. "I can only guess. We are somewhere in the hold of some ship. We must have been smuggled here, for what purpose I do not know. It may be we shall be carried out to sea. How then can we escape?"

The boat now was far from the dock in the lower bay of Grahoffen harbor. Under full way, she was headed for the open sea. The executive officer came to the captain in his office, and the latter turned upon him an inquiring eye.

"Steam yacht on our starboard quarters, sir," said the latter, "going fast, flying signals for us to slow down so he may come aboard."

"Come aboard—when we are under way and two hours back of our sailing hour? A pest take these little states which are fighting this cat and dog war! We have nothing to do with that—and I warrant it yonder stranger has."

"What orders, sir?"

"Straight ahead, and full speed."

"Very good, sir."

"What is the hour, Judson?" demanded the captain as the executive turned away.

"Four bells, sir."

"Make it so." And thus in nautical terms the voyage of the Prinz Adler was begun.

Begun, but not ended. Begun, but soon to be broken. The fast yacht swerved slightly and headed on such an angle as would intercept the liner's course. She sailed a splendid gait, her clean-cut bows rising black above the waves as now and again she leaped from one crest to another in her desperate speed. Some man was driving her who had a purpose; that was plain.

The captain himself went on deck as he heard the sound of a distant shot. It had come from the yacht's bow gun, a formidable looking black piece which might carry iron enough to sink a helpless liner.

"The damned pirate!" exclaimed the captain. A second report, a second plunge of white ahead gave him warning that it was time to halt.

"He'll sink us if we don't slow down," muttered the captain. His hand went out to the engine-room switchboard. A third shot gave evidence enough of the yacht's intentions. Once more the engine bells jangled far below. The order had come to slow down, to reverse. The giant liner trembled, half paused, slowly slacked her speed, and at last lay purring, even as the yacht swung swiftly alongside.

"What do you want?" called the captain of the Prinz Adler, addressing a tall figure which stood at the bow of the yacht. "What do you mean by stopping my ship?"

"Send me a boat at once," was his only answer. "I will explain when I come aboard. Hesitate and you may regret it."

Feeling under this the threat which may or may not have been meant in faith, but which served none the less, a ship's boat put out to the yacht and brought Count Frederick aboard. He at once made his way to the captain, whom he addressed brusquely.

"You have persons aboard this ship who are fugitives from justice. I come in our king's name to search you before you leave the three-mile limit of our own waters. Perhaps you are ignorant of these facts yourself. Lay to, while we try to get the information confirmed for you. I know they are on board."

They were indeed on board, but none knew of their presence. Far beneath the lowest deck of the ship the guilty deck hands had met their prisoners and sought to use such arguments as they could find to induce their silence.

As for Roleau, he would hear to nothing. The joy of combat once more came to his soul. He fell upon these seamen, and weak as he still was waged such battle that at last they fled. Kitty and himself followed them. Almost they gained the freedom of the upper deck.

But what could a weak woman do against such odds—or even Roleau? Even as Count Frederick's boat came alongside, and as he stood conferring with the ship's captain, the two prisoners who made the subject of the controversy were left in such case as might very well prove the captain's assertion that he had on board no passengers save such as ship's passenger list showed and had a right to show.

Neither Kitty nor Roleau had knowledge of what went on. Both had been laid senseless.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The BROKEN COIN by EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

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Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

SEVENTEENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER LX.

The Plotters of Grahoffen.

In the court of Grahoffen, meantime, mixed sensations occupied the minds of those responsible for the disappearance of Kitty Gray and her servant, Roleau. Old Cortislaw and his redoubtable aid, Count Sachio, foregathered in the palace rooms immediately following the acts which had meant the forced deportation.

"She has gone, then, Sachio?" demanded the king.

"Without a doubt, your majesty! I myself from a distance saw the two hoisted inboard in freight nets—as so many cattle. They went into the hold of the vessel beyond any question—whether or not they come out again is their concern, not ours!"

"I am not so sure," said the old king thoughtfully, "not so sure. True, we have rid ourselves of potential trouble, but at the same time we have deprived ourselves of potential aid in questions not yet solved. They might have been useful, perhaps—"

"You mean the girl?"

"Yes. She has a mind, be sure of that. But what she might have done of use to us we may no longer ask with profit—she now is beyond our recall. That is only as to her knowledge, whatever it may have been, of the broken coin. As to this other enigma, this scrap of paper, which may or may not be connected therewith—who knows? I declare, I am like a horse in the dark—ready to shy at any such trifle as a scrap of paper blowing on the wind."

"We still have it, your majesty—we took it from her."

"Yes, but when we separate the two—the scrap of paper and the scrap of a girl—what do we actually accomplish? We have only a larger secret left, a deeper mystery. Curses on all women, anyhow! They only make us trouble. Mysterious themselves, they solve no mysteries. The best I hope for yonder traveler is that she sinks at sea. I swear, sometimes our little kingdom bids fair to sink in its own waves of trouble."

"Well, now, your majesty," said Sachio, who disliked this discontent of his sovereign, at no time safe for any courtier, "let us see what we ourselves may be able to do in solution of this mystery which has been bequeathed us. Surely our minds are as good as those of a rattle-brained girl from America."

"Hum—it may be true. What do you propose, at least?"

"Why, your majesty, that is obvious. What we must do is to get into our hands the other half of this scrap of paper. It lies still somewhere over in Gretzhoffen, along with the other half of the Gretzhoffen coin."

"Yes, along with the missing half of that coin, also! They hold the key, or half of it, that is true. And yet we hold as much as they—half of the answer. Each is complement of the other. That is to say, a stalemate, a drawn game—there is never profit in any such."

"Stay, your majesty, let us see further before we call the game done. Surely our chances outweigh theirs, for we have a monarch to guide us who has brains and courage. I count myself, also, as worth an equal balance with Count Frederick, their strongest man. And how shall we estimate yonder drunken, worthless, puppet king of theirs—how shall he stand in comparison with ours?"

Sachio bowed deeply. His flattery was not without its effect on the old king, who smiled his approval.

"My dear Sachio, whenever I need comfort you have it at hand!" exclaimed he. "Well, then, what further may we plan against them? How may we loose their hold upon these secrets which perplex and menace us so much?"

"Why, this: That we profess a new and profound friendship for Michael. He will be but too glad to listen to our proposition, be sure of that."

"Suppose we may be assured of that—what then?"

"He would be willing to do us some little favor if it caused him but little trouble to grant it. He looks on us as defeated. Let us encourage him to play the role of the grand Caesar, able to be gracious, to be magnanimous, to a fallen foe."

"Good—go on—I see the point."

"So we ask of that weak mind something which his mere sloth will dispose him to grant us—nothing much—only the ownership of a worthless bit of paper. He does not know its value—perhaps he does not know of its existence."

"But if he knows nothing whatever of that scrap of paper—if he never heard of it—"

"All the more he will be willing to part with it if we ourselves can find it. As to that, we do not know. This is but a drag-net sort of move on our part, but it may take some fish—who knows?"

"Good! Then what is our next move, as you perceive it?"

"Why, let us make a cautious move to feel out their point—as a fencer tests his adversary's wrist, to feel his strength at the hilt. Let us send a note of friendship to Michael and ask him if it be not better that these two little kingdoms, separated by so narrow a stretch of land, should not henceforth meet in harmony, and no longer join in armed encounters. Let us point out to him that there are other nations greater than either of us—or both of us—which perhaps some time may look our way. Let us show him the virtue of an alliance between these two kingdoms. Let us play upon his fears, his vanity, his weakness, until we have convinced him that friendship with us is a thing desirable for him. Let us ask good Michael if he is not graciously disposed to be our friend today—to be our magnanimous and powerful friend!"

Sachio grinned broadly at his own irony, and his monarch gave vent to a loud laugh, his gray beard curling at the thought of his courtier's cunning as well as his loyalty to his own king.

"Excellent! Sachio, excellent!" he exclaimed. "Nor do I doubt the success of this thing as you plan it, if you yourself shall carry it forward. Do you then write that humble missive that you suggest—do you yourself ask Michael to be graciously generous to a weak and pleading friend! Ha! ha! Sachio, what next lies on the board for us?"

"Why, then, your majesty, we are alongside the fence that lies between us. We do not know how far it may be until we come to a gate or a gap, but sometimes there will be a gate or a gap, through which we may pass. In some way I doubt not, I and others may perhaps gain access to the palace of Gretzhoffen. That gives us our footing. As for them, they sleep and revel. As for us, we act. It is the man of action who succeeds. Let them dream—we will act."

"Your counsels jump with my own, my dear Sachio," said Cortislaw. "I have small use for the man who dreams or the man who waits. It shall be as you say. A test of this at least cannot harm us, and may prove of extreme value. Go forward with it then, as you have said."

CHAPTER LXI.

The Discovery.

The two kingdoms now hung on the fate of two refugees, two castaways, themselves forlorn and hopeless. Even as Grahoffen's king and its leading man of affairs pondered the absence of these two, so likewise the kingdom of Gretzhoffen was concerned in their absence, in their welfare, in their future, in their return.

Count Frederick stood on the deck of the Prinz Adler liner and fronted the captain of that vessel, who was severe in his resentment of the liberties he deemed to have been taken with himself and his ship.

"I tell you," said he, "I have nothing to do with your little war here. I am neutral—I am a carrier in the open trade of the open sea. My government will demand reparation for this insult to our flag."

"Sir," said Count Frederick, "your government be damned! I will take my chances with your government. Of what use will your government be to you if we blow your ship out of the water?"

"You threaten me, then?"

"No, I do not deal in threats. I tell you that I know the persons whom I mentioned are on this ship. I mean to take them off."

"And I tell you again that there are no such passengers on my ship. The ship's lists show all who have sailed with us. You may look for yourself—examine our books all you like. Do you take us for pirates—are we beyond all responsibilities?"

"I do not call you pirates," said Count Frederick, calmly. "I only call you dupes. I believe you have been deceived. You are not in possession of all the facts. My own men have told me that these persons were to be smuggled aboard the ship."

"Heiliger Gott!" mused the captain. "What is this that has been undertaken here? I never discovered it. Who and what are these persons—if there be indeed any such aboard?"

"Two, as I said. One is a man of small rank, no more than a faithful servant, powerful and resourceful himself, once loyal in my own service, now loyal in that of his mistress."

"And she—the other?"

"Yes, a young American of youth and much beauty. She was in this country on business of her own. Without plan she became involved in affairs between these two monarchs. She has been the victim of evil fortune, not through fault of her own. Now, I am telling you the truth—since I have gained my purpose of an audience with you. You may rely upon what I have said, captain. This is the truth, so far as I know it."

"Then why not let them sail for their own country—if she has been injured here why not let her go back to her own country? I am booked for New York. If that be a city of her native land, why not that port as well as any other? And how shall I know your own motives?"

Count Frederick paused in thought at this. "True—that is true," said he. "Very well, we will search your ship. When we find the young woman let her decide what she wishes to do. If she says she wishes to go back to her home, I will not prevent it. But if she be asked to go back against her will, then I shall take her with me, no matter at what cost. At least she should have the choice of decision—she should not be stowed aboard like a dumb beast with no volition of her own."

"We are quite at one as to that," assented the captain. "Good, we will search the ship—I am convinced we shall not find these persons in any of the cabins."

"Stay," he added an instant later, "I recall that a short time back there was complaint of noises below decks! I sent some men to look into that. Where are they?"

He pressed a bell and soon one of his assistant officers came.

"Go, bring me the men I sent to examine the cargo a while ago. There was some talk of a noise as of loose animals in the hold."

After a time the officer returned, pushing before him two seamen. They were the same who had been dispatched on the errand mentioned. But

They Rose After an Agonizing Instant Which Seemed Death Itself.

they were not now as they had been then. Both bore marks of conflict, and of conflict which had not gone altogether to their favor.

"How, now, you dogs?" cried the captain. "What's wrong with you? Have you been fighting among yourselves?"

One, quicker witted than the other, gave his assent to this at once. The second was not so fortunate.

"'Twas the animals," said he, with cunning not quite equal to the issue.

"What? You disagree, then?" said the captain. "What does this mean, fellows? Animals? What animals? Lions?—tigers?—I did not know we carried such!"

The sailor hung his head, and the captain's suspicions grew.

"You are covering up something here. Speak, you ruffians, and speak the truth."

"Captain," began the man once more, "we are innocent. But we found two stowaways below, and thinking to bring them up, they fell upon us and beat us—a man and a woman."

"How did they get aboard—where are they then—who are they?"

"They must have come in with the freight by the lift from the dock, captain. The young woman—she is beautiful—and as you say, she is like a tiger. As to the man, yes, he was like a lion. They fought us, you see."

"Where are they now, spitzbuben, ruffians?"

The speaker paled suddenly. "They are there in the hold," he said.

"Lead us to them then."

They turned to find their way to the lower portions of the ship, but even as they did so they met an interruption. An agitated man, grimy and dirty, in oil-stained clothing, came running towards the captain's room—none less than the chief engineer of the vessel, who obviously had been engaged in commoner duties than naturally belonged to him.

"Captain—quick!" he exclaimed. "There is trouble with the engines."

"What's wrong?" inquired the ship's master.

"The right-hand tubular has gone bad," exclaimed the engineer. "She has been pounding like a million hammers. The water is low, and the intake's clogged. Something's wrong—I cannot tell what. We have tried to shut her off and can't. The boiler may go at any minute."

"Explode?" inquired the captain calmly.

The engineer could only nod.

"Stay," called Frederick at this juncture. "Let the engineer go back to his work. Let us first find the helpless persons below. If danger impend let us bring them up to have their chance for safety."

The captain, a gallant man withal, turned to him and nodded grimly. "Go back to your post, Miller," he said to the engineer. "We will join you presently."

He himself led the way to the lift which led to the lower decks and the hatchway which covered the ladders into the ship's hold.

They found themselves at last deep in the bowels of the vessel, among the bales and casks of the cargo, where for a time all was darkness and mystery. But as they hurried here and there, commanding the guidance of the two recreant seamen and casting the rays of their lights hither and yon, at last they saw a trussed-up bundle behind a bale of goods which seemed to have some human semblance. It was Roleau. Frederick himself was first at his side. He bent over him, freed him, and after a time revived him.

"Monsieur—your excellency!" said he at length. "It is you."

"Where is she?" demanded Frederick. "Was she here?"

"I have known nothing for some time, it seems. Yet she was here, yes—she is gone, I know not where."

Frederick left him to continue his hurried search in the confused freightage of the ship's hold. At last he found that which he sought.

She tried feebly to raise herself as she heard footsteps, heard a voice she knew to be that of her friend.

"Mademoiselle—thank God!" was all Count Frederick could say.

"It is you, then?" was her reply. "What has happened? Why are you here?"

"I am here, my dear mademoiselle, in the justice of the immortal gods—to save you—to care for you. I heard of the plot against you. My own boat lies alongside—I have come. I am here to take you from this ship, if so you wish. Come then, let us hasten. There is scant time."

They all crowded now to the ladders up from the hold, and, rapidly as they might, found their way back to the upper deck. There came confusion, noise, trampling, shouts, sounds not ordinary at this stage of the voyage of a vessel putting out to sea. The passengers themselves suspected something to be wrong. They crowded now about the captain excitedly, expostulating. The master of the ship pushed them aside.

"Well, Miller," he demanded again of the oil-stained engineer who hurried up, "what is it?"

"It may be a minute, sir—or less!"

In an instant they were face to face with the ultimate peril of the seas—fire, explosion on shipboard.

There came from below that sound which had been expected, dreaded—a muffled, heavy roar, comparable to nothing in the world in terrifying quality at such a time as this. The ship so lately safe and strong beneath them all, now trembled. Midway her decks rose, spread apart, fell. A cloud of blinding white steam rolled from the engine rooms, stifling and scalding all within its way. Cries of anguish came from below decks, cries of despair. To these were added now the far more numerous cries of those in mortal terror.

Obedient to their orders for a time, the crew held to their posts. The boats were lowered one after another. Yet into each there piled a senseless mass of packed humanity, overcrowding and rendering it useless as it reached the surface of the sea.

Children and women and strong men fought now for a place in the last of the boats. Discipline broke and failed. What had been a happy party of travelers was now a disorganized mob.

His arms supporting Kitty on one side, those of Roleau on the other, Count Frederick did his best to reach the rail. Useless, hopeless! They were forced back time and again.

"Jump!" cried Frederick at last. "Jump! We will swim for it. We must take the last chance."

The look on the face of the girl at his side was one in part of despair, but more of trust. Unhesitatingly the three sprang together.

The sea closed over them. They rose after an agonized instant which seemed death itself—rose but to see the giant ship which had carried them raise her bows aloft, shiver and tremble, and slowly slide back and down beneath the waves. In the whirlpool which marked the spot they were but little human units, floating as best they might among scores and hundreds of others.

"This way!" cried Frederick, and he and Roleau aided Kitty to a floating piece of wreckage. But others saw it also. Time and again they were fought back from it as others stronger or more remorseless claimed it as their own.

In all this commotion of shouting and struggling men, of wailing women, of flailing arms and beating fists, Frederick and Roleau lost sight of Kitty at last—she had gone, they knew not where, in that chaos of the sea.

"Where is she?" demanded Frederick weakly, himself well-nigh spent. "Which way?"

"I know not," gasped Roleau, himself in as bad case as the other. "I cannot tell, but fear that she is gone."

They swam about for a time in search, but could not make out the whereabout of her whom they sought; then they hoisted themselves one on each side of a floating spar and rested.

"Allow me, excellency," said Roleau, and flung across the end of his belt. "Let us lash fast. I cannot hold much longer."

Spent and hopeless, they rested as they might and allowed fate to have its way with them.

"Our boat—the yacht, excellency," exclaimed Roleau at length. "Where is she—the vessel which brought you out?"

Frederick could only shake his head. "Gone," said he. "I doubt not she was scuttled by the heavy ironwork blown out by the explosion. There is no hope."

CHAPTER LXII.

Marooned.

The vessel when blown up was well on her way with the favoring winds which she sought, which in ordinary course would have carried her out into the Mediterranean.

How Count Frederick and Roleau lived they scarcely knew. Happily the water at that latitude was not cold, and the day was one of calm.

"Roleau, she has perished!" murmured Count Frederick. "She is gone. Let me, too, perish then, for I have never been able to say that which I should have said. I have had no opportunity to expiate many things which I have done."

"As well die now as any time," said Roleau.

Wind and wave carried these two far—they knew not how far, and had no means of guessing, for they could not tell how long a time had passed since the explosion which had sunk the ship. They knew not which way to look for land, if land there might be. It was by mere chance that at one moment, as they flung high on the crest of the wave, Count Frederick saw, many hours after the wrecking of the ship, something which caused him to give an exclamation of surprise.

"Roleau," he exclaimed, "There is land ahead, I believe!"

"Look!" said Count Frederick at length. "They are coming out to us."

Surely enough, even from where they were they could see dark forms running here and there, could see the launching of a boat, could see it coming on, rising and falling on the waves.

At length the craft came alongside, manned by strange, swarthy natives, whose speech they did not know, yet who seemed friendly enough withal to serve as rescuers for them. With small ceremony they were hauled on board, and the boat, turning, made way back again to the shore ahead.

"'Tis an island, Roleau," said Frederick, after a moment spent in examination. "Not so large, but excellent under foot, is it not true? And these people seem not unfriendly to us."

For a time they had been left alone, but now they saw certain of the natives returning with food and water. Upon these both the shipwrecked adventurers fell with eagerness. Their captors stood about and grinned in pleasure. All the wealth of Count Frederick, his gold, his castles, his lands—these things seemed little in value as compared to what these swarthy natives brought him now.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Kitty, the Castaway.

If Count Frederick and Roleau had been dismayed when they saw Kitty Gray swept away from them in the mad struggle for safety in the sea, what must have been her own feelings as she found herself separated from these powerful friends? Once more she found herself alone—and once more in the blind instinct for self-preservation she did what she could for her own safety.

She dared not think of the fate of her friends. She mourned them now as dead, but still in her subconscious mind kept bitterly fighting the conviction even as it came. And as she argued, she found herself swept away farther and farther from the place where last she had seen them.

In some way, she knew not how, Kitty found herself among many others upon the same considerable piece of wreckage where Roleau and Frederick had endeavored to place her soon after the explosion. Many others now clung to this. She shuddered as she cast a glance about her over the water, and drew closer to the center of the raft. One after another she saw them lose their hold; one after another she saw them carried away by the waves. As for herself, preserved miraculously, she knew not how, she fastened herself as best she could to the frail floating floor and ceased to struggle. Mercifully her senses left her for a time.

When she came once more slowly and painfully to a realizing sense of what had befallen, she looked about her wearily.

She was alone upon the sea. Of those who had been about her, none now survived! Not far from her a body or two floated, but not a living being was to be seen, not a survivor save herself had found this means of safety.

There was no food. There was no fresh water for her. There was no means of raising a sail, or using an oar, even of hoisting a signal had she had one. And yet the sky above her was so blue and gentle, the sea around her so kind, that all now seemed less terrible than it had been but now. Hungry and thirsty as she was she shuddered as she thought of the added pangs that might be hers. She called aloud in her distress, her despair There came no answer, save in the shrieks of the circling birds which hovered, ghostlike, above her.

The waves bore her onward, she knew not where, and cared not how, for how many hours she could not tell. Face to face with herself, her past, her future, the unhappy girl passed a period of unknown duration, engaged in her own reflections.

It was not her own life she feared to lose, so she said, for life after all was a little thing, a temporary passage at best. But if only she might have lived now for the sake of that which she felt in her own heart—for the sake of that uncompleted period of her own life whose dawn she acknowledged to have seen but now!

He was gone! She had seen him swept away before her very eyes. He was her enemy, who had so often taunted her and defied her, who had fought her in every contest of wits—yet in turn he had aided her to escape and saved her but now—instead of enemy he had turned into friend or more than friend—and he was gone. The sunset of her day came even with its dawn.

"Yes," she said to herself, "he saved me at the cost of his own life." And the life of that other faithful friend, Roleau, the dauntless, it, too, had been wasted to save her own—the life she now could hold but worthless, since it must be lived alone. They were dead—and she had been the cause of that! What could life hold further for her?

Kitty Gray bent her head down upon her knees. Her hair fell about her face. And thus she sat, she knew not how long, resigning herself to her fate, making her peace with what she felt now must come. "Now," said she "let me die!" And when once more the sleep of exhaustion came upon her she thought it that of death itself.

She wakened, none the less, in time—for strong indeed are the ties that bind us whether or not we like to this life into which we are born without our asking. She wakened and stared with hollow eyes about her at a world which she neither knew nor loved. But even so, at length her gaze found something to cause her eyes to kindle, her breath to come a trifle faster.

Far in the distance she had caught sight of the shore of distant land—the same sight which in turn had met the gaze of that friend whom now she mourned. It lay there low on the sea and distant—land, some sort of land, she knew not what.

She looked at it dully, apathetically. In truth, she was too far gone to care. Whether or not she retained consciousness through the remainder of her voyage, she herself could never tell.

At length, a weak and unimportant bit of flotsam of the sea, Kitty Gray was cast up upon the shore, rejected by that sea but now so eager to claim her as its own. Yes, by some miracle, she dared not ask what, she had been spared. This at least was land. If death must come, it was not now to be death through peril of the sea. Wearily she lifted herself from her bed upon the sand, raised herself upon an elbow to look about her.

What she saw gave her no great delight. Rather, had she had strength left for terror, she had known additional terror now.

Approaching from a distance were certain figures, inhabitants of this land, whose look she could not recognize, whose language she could not understand. They approached, shouting, gesticulating. They were armed, and they advanced upon her menacingly.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Broken Coin

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by Grace Cunard

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

(Copyright, 1915, by Wright A. Patterson)

Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

EIGHTEENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER LXIV.

Sachio and Michael.

The two rival capitals of these mooted lands still faced one another in a conflict as yet undecided. Which were deeper in duplicity it had been difficult to say, but as to which surpassed in active measures no doubt at all remained. Count Sachio, restless and energetic, already was taking further steps to enforce his own will and that of his sovereign upon the weaker mind which purported to govern at Gretzhoffen.

It was as Sachio had prophesied—the sloth of Michael left him open to any proposition which came couched in fair words and which offered no disturbing changes in his own personal plans. He acceded readily enough to the proposals of the Grahoffen courtier to lengthen the armistice between the two warring countries with a view to a formal and final peace. Readily enough also he admitted into his own household the archplotter of the forces of his hereditary enemy.

Unopposed, indeed invited, Sachio made his way much as he liked throughout the Gretzhoffen palace, with whose interior he already was more or less familiar. It was his plan in case of any challenge to refer to the royal ruler who was his host.

He paid special attention to that apartment where he had found the partially destroyed original script whose missing half he sought. Here, minutely, patiently, like a hound running a difficult trail, he went over the place inch by inch, seeking to find some trace which would lead him to his quarry.

But success did not attend his efforts, though these he prosecuted even in those portions of the palace where so recently he and his troops had faced death when the levels were flooded by waters turned in from the castle moats. He was willing to despair, and in fact had turned away with the intention of giving up the search, when he met a suboficer of the guard who proved difficult to handle in his usual easy fashion.

"Halt! Who goes there?" challenged this guard as he saw Sachio emerge from one of the lower chambers.

"A friend!" rejoined Sachio promptly, in military formula.

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign!" came the gruff command.

"The countersign?" said Sachio. "Ah, well, my friend, now that I think of it, I have not had it given to me. 'Twas my own neglect. But I am a friend of the king—'twas he who gave me permission to explore these portions of the palace. I was curious to see the operations of this system of defense by water—it was something new to me."

"That is all very well," rejoined the soldier, "but explanations of that sort are scarcely good enough."

"Take me, then, to the king himself," said Sachio.

"Why should I?" rejoined the other. "What business is it of yours to know about the lower levels of our palace? These are ticklish times, and there have been such things as spies."

"Spies!" exclaimed Sachio, virtuously. "I, a spy—is that what you mean, fellow? If so, I command you to carry me forthwith to the presence of the king himself. He knows me well, and you should have a care not to offend one who is under the king's protection."

The sheer audacity of this intruder had its effect, even upon the blunt soldier who had accosted him. Sachio was indeed taken to the presence of Michael, and there his bold prediction proved true—Michael reprimanded publicly the officer who had done his duty, and showed his public favor to the man who was indeed a spy, although not suspected of being one.

"What, fellow?" exclaimed the king to the soldier, when Sachio had made his explanations—"what do you mean by offering indignity to our friend and future ally in this fashion? Away with you, and do you report at the guardhouse under arrest. Your trial shall come later."

"My dear Sachio," resumed Michael, "you see how prompt we are with our protection of our friends? Do not take it ill of us that one of our underlings has done what his superior officers or his sovereign would never think of countenancing. We trust you will accept this disclaimer."

"It was nothing, your majesty," replied the wily statesman, "and I assure your majesty the incident shall not linger in my memory. May we perhaps venture to drown in a bumper to your majesty's good health all thought of this misunderstanding? I will drink to the health of Michael and the prosperity of his kingdom."

"Quite agreeable!" exclaimed Michael; "and let us follow that with another to the final and peaceful conclusion of that unhappy misunderstanding which has heretofore divided these two kingdoms."

They drank. The befuddled friends of Michael joined them in hilarity if not intelligent, at least vociferous.

"But, my good Sachio," resumed Michael after a time, "let me ask you a question. Yours was ever a keen eye for beauty, and a good scent on the trail of beauty itself. Tell me, then, what became of that beautiful young American who so lately was with us—and who, if you will allow me to say it, had so much to do with the late repulse of your forces? I have not seen her since that time—nor, now that I recall it, have I seen her friend, Count Frederick. They have been gone some days or hours. I cannot tell which measures their absence, whether clock or calendar, but I know she is not here, for every room of the palace has been searched for her, and she is not found."

"Your majesty," rejoined Sachio, "it is astonishing how a keen brain like your own can guess another's secrets! I also make a claim to humble intelligence enough to have guessed your wishes in this matter, but, alas, I can be of no service to your majesty. I grieve to add, neither can anyone else be of service."

"What? She is dead!"

"Oh, not so bad as that. But she is gone."

"Gone—where?"

"To her own country—back to that America of which your majesty has heard her boast so freely."

"How do you know this, my friend?" demanded Michael.

Sachio smiled. "Who should know better?" said he. "Let me confess. We took yonder young lady a prisoner and carried her away with us; but we could not hold her as such. Indeed, we no longer hold any quarrel with Gretzhoffen and there was no longer a question of prisoners as between the two kingdoms. This young lady was seen to take ship."

"At what port?"

"At ours, your majesty. Her astonishing ingenuity enabled her to escape from our guards. Like Catiline of old, she has escaped, she has evaded, she has broken forth! And a good riddance of her, so say we all!"

"All, my good Sachio? I am not so sure. How shall I rid my memory of her eyes so beautiful, her hair so lovable, her figure—her so charming and delicate figure? Fortune does not often repeat such favors. We may not expect to see her like again at any early date."

"That is as it is," said Sachio, pretending to heave a vast sigh of sympathy. "But what can we do? She took it all into her own hands, and by this time is well on her way to America. There is not the slightest doubt regarding either her departure or her destination—she was rather bold about it, in fact, and made no secret of her plans."

"Was she a spy, think you, Sachio?"

"Without doubt, your majesty, and I well rue it that she did not receive the punishment fit for a spy. True, she was beautiful—"

"Yes, yes!" assented Michael. "Such eyes, such a figure—think you that she will return?"

"I truly hope not, your majesty," returned Sachio fervently, and for once he spoke the truth, even on the chance of offending this amorous king.

CHAPTER LXV.

The Unknown Countries.

What now of those to whom Count Sachio had so lightly given carte blanche to oblivion? Certainly there was left behind them no trace or clue which could give a hint of the extraordinary circumstances now enmeshing them. They might all of them, Kitty, Count Frederick, Roleau, as well have been dead indeed and sunk at sea, so far as any hint of their fate was concerned. They had vanished from the earth. The ship that bore them had vanished from the water as well.

It was a strange and unreal country which faced Count Frederick when he found solid land under foot once more. He turned to life and its happiness only with a dull apathy, a lagging interest.

Frederick did not note that the faithful Roleau had become separated from him in the confusion following the landing of the boat. In truth, Roleau, exhausted as he was, himself had noted but little of what had gone on. Finding himself finally left practically alone, he made off down the beach in search of food and water, while meantime Frederick was accompanied by a party of natives up the beach and into the village which served as headquarters for that portion of the island. Here he was brought before the chief. From the look of him and his subjects, Count Frederick fancied himself to be on an island somewhere off the African coast.

Whether these people were friends or foes he could not tell at first, for he understood neither their language nor their gesticulations, but it occurred to him that whichever they might be it would not be amiss for him to impress them with a feeling of his own power. He could not tell whether or not they were familiar with the effect of firearms, but recalled all he had read of the terror inspired in savage minds by the use of such weapons. He drew from his pocket the pistol which he had carried, and looked about him for some object at which to aim.

A wild duck was floating in the lagoon not far away, and at this Count Frederick took careful aim, and fired—with the extraordinary good luck to kill it outright. This feat brought out a most ludicrous activity amongst the natives. In consternation they flung themselves before him, clasped his knees, and laid their foreheads upon the earth even as Man Friday had in the presence of Crusoe of old. Obviously they were not disposed to curry favor with him now, and not to attack him. As for himself, possessed only of such ammunition as remained in his single cartridge clip, he assumed such an attitude as he fancied would best display him as a conqueror—although in truth he felt himself far from such.

They led him through the village to a place where he was offered food and water—both now imperatively craved by his starved body.

Unable to understand what was desired of him, and indifferent as to the meaning of the colloquy going on about him, for some time his interest in life and its affairs was so lax that he paid no attention to anything that was happening. At length, however, he noticed something which caused him to take a sudden and eager interest in his surroundings.

Two men came running, evidently from a distant part of the island and evidently bearers of news of some importance, as could be proved by the reception given their hurried story. But what was that story?

There is a certain virtue in necessity itself. There is a certain common denominator in human emotions. There is perhaps a certain unrecognized common denominator in human expression of human emotion—some universal language, whether of word or gesture, or of the unspoken telepathic quality of the mind itself. Count Frederick understood not one word of this language which he heard, yet he knew—because he must know—something of the subject which these persons were discussing.

The men had come far—one could tell that, their looks proved it. They had seen something strange, something extraordinary had happened, some event of interest or importance had occurred, else they would not have come so fast and so far. This was easy enough to reason out.

What was that event? What could happen out of the ordinary on this desert island, unless it were something coming from beyond the narrow horizon of that island—say, a shipwreck, or the landing on these shores of some survivor such as he himself had been?

That would explain these hurried messengers. But if that were true, who or what was the survivor or adventurer discovered in a distant part of this same land? Was it a man or men, was it a woman or women? What was the meaning of these excited ejaculations, these gestures, these contortions?

Guessing, rather than knowing, Count Frederick fancied that these men were telling about a woman who like himself had been cast up by the waves.

The keen intentness of the white man's brain, for countless generations trained in logic and analysis, infinitely superior to the mentality of these half brutes about him, served to force itself into some comprehension of what might almost as well have been an unspoken thought on the part of these others. The eye of the white man kindled, the figure of the white man straightened. He knew! They were trying to tell that they had found a woman shipwrecked and cast upon this island.

If so, who was it, who could it be? Was it she whom he sought? Was fate merely jesting with him once more, or mercifully intending to teach him the one truth he craved?

The chief himself somewhat confirmed Count Frederick's surmises. He came now and pointed to one of the women of his own tribe, then approaching Frederick, he pulled up his sleeve and ran his hand over the white man's skin, pointing again to the woman. Plainly, a white woman had been discovered! That itself was an extraordinary occurrence here. Admiration, wonder, in part consternation, existed among these simple-minded natives.

But, obviously, they intended themselves to go to see this strange creature. The chief called about him some of his men. Count Frederick saw his opportunity in this. He placed himself at the head of the little band, and patting his pistol, held it up, as showing that he himself, owner of this powerful weapon, was the one leader fit for this errand of discovery of this strange white woman.

Kitty Was Held Suspended Above the Unknown Abyss.

CHAPTER LXVI.

The Caverns.

When Kitty Gray awakened to consciousness upon the beach of a strange land whither she had been carried by no purpose of her own, she looked once more into the face of peril. The savages who surrounded her showed no sign of pity or kindness. Upon the contrary, whooping and yelling, they fell upon her and dragged her in spite of herself toward their own village.

This village had a ruler of its own, no doubt chief for that part of the country.

He was a savage of peculiarly fierce and forbidding visage, and Kitty felt her blood run cold as she faced his evil gaze. The natives, yelling in glee, practically cast her at his feet. Evidently they were giving to Caesar the things which they thought were Caesar's—in this case, woman, the spolia opima of all wars and all conquests. The evil face of the savage monarch relaxed into a grin which made Kitty shudder.

What woman was this now brought by chance to the presence of this ogre? Surely he had never seen her like before. Moreover, she was alone, a prisoner, helpless. The progress of reason hereabouts was swift and simple, and the chief himself did not lack directness in his methods. He gave a sign to his men, and the girl was dragged away, struggling as best she might, and flung into a hut which she knew was to serve as a prison.

Here in a corner of the dark interior she cowered in terror before the apparitions conjured up by her own imagination. She had not long to wait. The chief himself came, little suspecting the resistance he was to meet—that of an enraged and despairing woman. So valiant did Kitty prove herself in repulsing his odious advances, that he was glad enough to give her up and make his way back to his hammock, leaving her to her own devices.

Outside the hut Kitty could now hear loud cries, orders, shouts, exclamations, all the sounds of a crowd gathering—for what purpose she could not guess. The meaning of this also was not long left in doubt for her. Again the door of her hut was darkened, and again the natives intruded upon her privacy. Forceful hands dragged her once more before the chief.

The latter, smiling his hideous purpose of vengeance, pointed to a pile of firewood burning at the brink of a deep pit in the ground. He made signs to Kitty which she could not fail to understand.

Yes, she saw it now—she was to suffer the most horrible of deaths, that by fire! These people either were cannibals or fiends. Perhaps they purposed for her some rite of a horrible religion.

What could it matter to their victim, since the end would be the same, no matter what the reason for it?

But now they added the last touch of cruelty in their torture of her, that of delay. They did not carry her, resigned to the worst, at once to meet her fate; but on the contrary led her away and left her alone for a time, a prey to her own reflections, the victim of her own imaginations.

Only at times her strong will, her strong body, rebelled at the thought of death. Then she would cry out. "Roleau! Roleau!" she would exclaim, raising her hands; "Help, help! Come to me!" But more often than his name, she invoked that of another. She heard her own voice, almost without her own will, calling aloud for Count Frederick, the man so late her enemy, yet so ready and so powerful in any time of stress or danger!

"Frederick!" she moaned, again and again. "Where are you? Why do you not come?"

But to all this, only the howling derision of her captors made answer. She must, then, die!

In the last moment of their caprice, or in the full time of their decision, they haled her once more forth from the hut, up to the brink of the sacrificial pit itself, where now she saw the awakening flames.

Facing this culmination of their heathen rites, whatever were their purposes, their innocent victim again made such battle as she could against her captors. Shrieking she called again and again upon those names with which once she could conjure—called also upon the last name spoken by human hearts in despair. Who shall tell whether or not there be higher powers controlling circumstances such as these? At least at this crucial moment there came a rescue, if rescue it might be called.

There burst from the corner of the nearby forest a strange, ill-shapen, half-clad figure, whether or not human Kitty scarce could tell. It was a man, a white man, clad in tattered fragments of what once had been a white man's garment. Brawny, hairy, repulsive indeed, of guttural and incoherent speech, he seemed like no white man Kitty Gray ever had seen. A swift conviction came to her that he was demented, that he was a lunatic—perhaps preserved from death by the very reason of his lunacy.

Whoever or whatever he was, his design now seemed not unfriendly to the victim of these savage ceremonies already in progress. Sweeping aside with blows of his great arms the savages who clustered about her, he caught Kitty up in a gorillalike embrace, and with hoarse cries of defiance made his way with her to the cover of the woods.

The natives did not pursue them—Kitty could not tell why. Indeed, she scarce had time to reason, in this new terror at the formidable apparition which now had her in charge.

Then slowly, finding him not unfriendly, she found time to ponder and to plan. Certainly this being was, or had been, a white man. Certainly he could or once could have employed intelligible speech—might again be able to do so.

But speech of intelligible sort she did not hear. Only he bore her away to some distance, until at length safe in the cover of the forest, he set her down.

Kitty looked about her. She found herself in a situation which she could liken to nothing else in all her experience.

A steep trail led down the declivity of a craterlike opening, evidently the mouth of a great cavern reaching back under the hill. The opening would not easily have been guessed by a stranger in those parts, even though passing close by in the forest. It was, in short, the mouth of one of the vaultlike series of caverns formed in the lava rock of what had once been a volcanic hill.

Below, within, all seemed dark, cold, silent. It was a refuge—though what a refuge. She was rescued—but by what a rescuer!

He beckoned to her now, and she followed him down the steep slope. Came then long stretches of underground passages, how many, how long, Kitty could not tell.

At least she lived. In spite of all her terrors, in spite of all these additional doubts, she still lived. She might have been more disposed to make some effort in her own behalf, had she not felt full upon her that strange oppression always experienced by any human being finding himself deep beneath the surface of that earth upon which, and not under which, he was born to walk.

So far as she could see, her captor had no plan save that of safety from pursuit. And she still lived—she could say so much as that, if no more!

CHAPTER LXVII.

In the Bowels of the Earth.

Count Frederick and his little band of warriors did not at once arrive upon the solution of the mystery of the strange white woman. The childlike caprice of the natives led him hither and thither, to this village and to that; so that a considerable time had elapsed before at length he found himself upon the scene of the late fateful happenings, although himself at that time still ignorant alike of the occurrences and their cause. To him this was but one more savage village, one more set of difficulties, one more series of disappointments.

They brought him, guarded by his own warriors, and hence for the time safe, into the presence of the same chief who had devoted Kitty Gray so ruthlessly to the sacrifice. To Count Frederick he was only one more savage with whom he could hold no converse.

But even as he stood before the hut of this old ruffian Count Frederick's eye caught sight of something which caused his heart to leap.

It was a little object, an unimportant item which might have escaped any other eye than his. Yet his gaze was drawn to it irresistibly.

It was a bit of cloth, a torn trifle of soiled and sea-encrusted checkered cloth, a portion of a woman's garb. Count Frederick recognized it at once as a part of the dress skirt in which he had last seen Kitty Gray garbed. There was no mistaking it. He knew it as well as the pattern of his own apparel.

She had been here! The mysterious white woman was Kitty Gray!

Now indeed Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen became the man of action. Away now with doubt and despair—and welcome again the fierce resolve of a brave man determined to live and conquer, determined once more to achieve the dearest purpose of his life!

He caught from the post of the door which had torn off this fragment of cloth, and held it before the gaze of the chief—before the eyes of all his men. They knew what he meant when he demanded to see the wearer of this bit of cloth. They dreaded the sight of his anger, fell back before the menace of the little steel tube, unfamiliar as it was to them. They knew that this man would kill unless he found that which he sought—the captive but now rescued from the doom of fire.

Frederick's own men fell in behind him, and a right lusty contest directly arose between these two factions or tribes, whichever they may have been. As for Frederick himself, he had not time for matters of this sort. He hurried to hut after hut, tore aside roof after roof, wall after wall, hunting for the woman whom above all things he most desired to see. He did not find her. His questions brought no response.

Drawn by a horrible suspicion of the meaning of this fire built at the brink of the pit, he hurried thither to join the group of lingerers there, and now by mere chance found confirmation—and found hope as well.

He saw the print of a small boot heel in the sand, other footmarks just beyond—it was a trail. Yes, yes, she had been there. But the footprints ceased. The trail ended as though the maker of it had flown up into the air. Beyond, the imprint of large and misshapen feet still led.

Count Frederick now turned savagely upon these gibbering creatures about him, and the meaning of his demand was perfectly apparent to them. Threatening to throw them into the fire which they had prepared for another, he got from them shrieks of protest, much shaking of the head in denial, and much pointing on toward the forest which lay ahead. Some came to him and showed him the two lines of footprints, the one line continuing on and pointed to the forest, although themselves not venturing to follow.

With a new terror in his heart, yet feeling a conviction that Kitty Gray still lived, he did not pause to wreak a present vengeance upon these creatures, but hurried on along the broken trail.

The doglike craft of one or two of his own band of savages aided him. Not slacking speed, they pointed out where the trail ran. Now and again Count Frederick could see on the earth the imprint of the woman's feet where for a time she had rested or been put down. At length, at the brink of the abyss before which Kitty Gray so recently had stood, he saw the double imprint again—where both captive and captor had stood and looked down.

The trail led on, and down, whither none could guess. Frederick of Gretzhoffen did not stop to guess, but plunged forward impulsively. Whoever or whatever might be this creature which had carried her off, here at least was his lair.

The dusty floors of the cavern, lit by the flare of such torches as they found ready for such work, still retained the record. Captor and captive had walked here. Deeper and deeper into the caverns under the hill they followed the trail, until at length the distracted eyes of Count Frederick saw on ahead something to give him pause.

He saw Kitty Gray standing, alive, apparently unhurt, in a vast apartment of these subterranean vaults! Beyond, the floor seemed to break off—to what depth he could not guess. No egress at either extremity of the subterranean chamber could be seen from where he stood. The trail led thither, to where she stood—to where at her side stood also a strange misshapen figure of a man, or what had been a man.

"Mademoiselle!" cried Count Frederick, high and clear. "Courage!" and sprang forward.

Now this strange creature that had brought Kitty Gray hither seemed to fancy himself about to be robbed of his captive. For one moment he stood awaiting the onslaught of Count Frederick and his allies, then with a hoarse cry he caught Kitty Gray up in his arms again. A pace or so, and she was held suspended above the unknown abyss which lay below. Menacingly, her captor turned upon his assailant a face which at least offered one conclusion.

He made no coherent speech, but his attitude spoke loud.

Count Frederick halted. One step more, and the girl would be plunged into eternity.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE BROKEN COIN

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

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Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

NINETEENTH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER LXVIII.

Count Sachio's Search.

"Your majesty, I can now assure you of our success."

Count Sachio of Grahoffen spoke calmly. On his face was written full conviction of the truth of his words. He stood once more with his monarch in the great hall of the palace of Grahoffen, whither he had hastened at once on his return from the rival capital.

"Why, Sachio?" demanded Cortislaw. "What reason now to believe our success nearer than it has been any time these months past?"

"Your majesty asks proof? Look!"

Sachio held out in his hand the two halves, or what purported to be the two halves, of the broken coin of Gretzhoffen. He, indeed, supposed them to be both halves of that mysterious coin, although in truth one was only the counterfeit long since devised by Count Frederick to appease his own king. That Michael of Gretzhoffen had missed his former possession—that Kitty Gray still held one half of the actual coin—neither Sachio nor his king now knew.

Both conspirators bent above the bits of metal and both smiled in exultation. Their arduous search seemed now really to approach its end.

"By my faith, Sachio," exclaimed Cortislaw, "it seems indeed we have but to run the trail hard and fast a trifle further."

"Yes, your majesty, it remains only for your servant—your very faithful servant, may I say it?—to find the hiding place of the scripts and treasures themselves."

"That is a necessary detail," said Cortislaw, with a cold grin. "I have fed long enough on maps and keys and scripts—now I would dip my hands in actual mintage of gold coins—I would see the light of real gems shining, and not this ignis fatuus which we have followed so long over the morasses of doubt and uncertainty. Success! Success, Sachio—in real coins, in real gems, in real treasures—that success alone can mean anything to you or me."

"Be it so, your majesty!" said Sachio, with no abatement of his confidence. "I take my chances. I stake my life on the hazard of full success. If I find not the hidden treasures of Gretzhoffen, then hang my head on our walls as a warning to all boasters."

"Go, then," said the king coldly; "you have found your way within their gates before—do so again. Seek deeply—under the wall of the torture chamber, perhaps, the coin says—the treasure's hiding place lies deep under the walls—but precisely where is that?"

Always the king's cautious mind carried him into the doubts and difficulties of any case.

"It must be somewhere below and beyond the galleries which they flooded from the moats when they came near drowning all our troops," replied Sachio. "I know those galleries as I do my own bedchamber. Trust me to run out this puzzle to which we now have the key here in my hand. When I do, I shall dip my hands deep in actual mintage of gold coin."

"You will do nothing of the kind, Sachio," said his monarch. "You will reserve that first right for your king."

Sachio flushed red, but bowed, conscious of the swift rivalry of pirates who parcel unholy gains.

"True, your majesty," said he, "I spoke but in metaphor. The senior right in any such endeavor as this is always, of course, that of the king. The right and the pleasure of the monarch who has led us to such success as this is a thing paramount to all others. But swift enough shall be my course to your majesty, once I have found the actual hidding place."

"Agreed," said Cortislaw, and turned to gnaw his beard in the impatience of a man long balked of his most intimate desire.

And Sachio hastened, be that said for him. His swiftest car carried him across the devious way that lay between the two kingdoms, and duly he arrived at the door of the palace of Gretzhoffen. Here his acquaintance with the place and his ready reference of all inquirers to the king himself gained him easy access once more.

Michael, the weak, still dwelt in the palace, giving small care to the ruin and disorder which lay about him on all sides. Let others care for the government, let others make good the breaches in the capital's defense, let others reorganize the scattered forces of the army. Himself, he was content to continue his revelry in the palace with those who cared to join him, male or female, creatures dissolute as himself, who had clung to him fatuously in hope of possible reward at some later time.

Before this ruler Count Sachio of Grahoffen presently bowed humbly, professing his friendship, giving no token of his treacherous errand.

"What, again, friend Sachio of Grahoffen?" jested Michael when he saw him. "You have become one of our most faithful subjects, is it not so? I still miss Count Frederick, who has left many duties unperformed—I still miss the young American, who should be here to lighten the cares of the heavy hours. Yet you come—late our enemy, now our friend. What can we do for you, Sachio, to show our gratitude for your faithfulness?"

"Nothing, your majesty, save to allow me division of a flask, now and then, with the greatest monarch of the modern days. Nothing save to allow me to join your majesty for a lighter moment betimes, after the duties of the day are done. Meantime—since I would not weary your majesty—I pray no more than safekeeping within your majesty's walls, as I wander here and there. The art treasures of this palace surpass any with which I am acquainted. As a youth, I tried to paint, and I still love the work of those who have done as masters what my student hand could never do. May I look at the pictures in the galleries—the statues, your majesty?"

"With all the heart in the world, my dear Sachio!" exclaimed Michael. "Your discerning judgment is valued most highly. Make free with what you like, and come to us when you please."

This carte blanche was all that Sachio could ask. He accepted it literally. What he purposed actually was to make free with anything he saw; and he did indeed intend to return to King Michael when he pleased. Thus set free to wander as he liked in the palace of Gretzhoffen, he made no doubt whatever of his own quick arrival at the hidden door of the lost treasure of Gretzhoffen. As he bowed himself out he scarce could conceal the satisfaction on his face.

Sachio was an alert and active soul. His was no haphazard intellect, apt to accept the dictum of a mind less exact than his own. He was a soldier first, and next a diplomat, but all the time a model secret agent, a typical spy and detective. He now set about the business in hand, deliberately, with precision, methodically, so that he need not do any task a second time.

He himself had sketched a rough map of the lower galleries as he fancied them to lie. He calculated now that with the aid of this chart and his own earlier acquaintance with these subterranean chambers, it would be easy to find the last door that lay between him and the buried treasure of Gretzhoffen.

What scenes of horror these places must have held Sachio did not pause to ask. That souls had passed out there through these cold walls of stone, that human flesh had quivered here in torment and human voices broken in their anguish, meant naught to him. A king had seen fit to surround his treasures with such terrors in order to fence away all intruders. He had buried these treasures under the very floor of his torture chamber so that all might fear to intrude there in their search. Some might be deterred by such fears—but not Sachio of Grahoffen. He walked on calmly, unmoved, sure that his own persistence, his own cunning, had defeated the purpose of the dead king, whose methods so long had defied the avarice and greed of these two kingdoms.

Sachio lost little time in the earlier portions of the subterranean galleries, and satisfied himself only that he was not being pursued. Soon he arrived upon the lower levels, where he did not expect to meet disturbance. Now came the crux of his search.

He made his way slowly along the darkened channels carved at some unknown day from the granite rock on which stood the Gretzhoffen castle, tried door after door, and entered chamber after chamber, slowly, methodically, with no enthusiasm, but only the air of a man covering all possible mischances in his search.

He looked most carefully in that portion of the vaults where he had found the half of the torn parchment, but got no further trace of the missing portion. This gave him a certain pause, for he had figured that the broken coin and the broken parchment would correlate, would focus, somewhere nearly at the same point. But the stained and mildewed walls, still damp from their recent floodings, gave him but cold encouragement whichever way he turned. Any soul but his would have felt the chill of such environment.

"So," said he to himself, standing irresolute at last, and finding himself unable to decide what next to do, "my map has the misfortune of having been made from the imagination and not from facts in hand. But now—see, here the way forks."

Before him now lay a series of galleries still damp from the recent flooding from the moat. It was Sachio's theory, based upon he knew not what, that the treasure chamber must lie somewhere under the moat, that the flood gates must have been devised for some purpose of protecting it. He acted upon that theory now, and with no better guide than the greater dampness of the rock floors which he followed, he wandered on hour after hour.

At length he paused, helpless, puzzled, dumfounded. He had taken a wrong turn somewhere in this labyrinth of underground channels! He had not even found the water gates which had flooded these levels so recently. He had found no new recesses in the rocky walls. He had found nothing which in the least compared itself with the map he now held in his hand! The cold sweat broke out upon his forehead even in these icy depths.

"My God!" said Sachio of Grahoffen to himself, "I have failed."

Yes, Sachio had failed. He knew what that meant. Death was to be his portion for his failure. Would it come in one swift stroke at the hand of his monarch, moved by the frenzy of his disappointment? Or, would it come in the slow torture of deliberate revenge, wrought on him for that failure in the fiendish ingenuity of the icy soul of Cortislaw?

"I have failed," said Sachio to himself, "and through my own fault! I had success in my grasp and threw it away. That girl could have told me everything, and I sent her away—beyond all reach—out of our country! With her gone, we have no hope remaining—we never shall find it ourselves. She alone now could save my life—she whom I mistreated—and she whom I sent away."

"And Count Frederick," he went on, still musing to himself. "He was my enemy, and is today—but something tells me that he also has the clue. If he were here, I could wheedle or threaten him. Perhaps he is with her; who knows? And I have sent her away! Did ever a man gain aught by bullying a woman? Fair speech with them—or the bowstring—those are the only ways. I am sentenced, doomed, and by my own fault."

Discouraged, baffled, perhaps after all, affected by the gloom of these surroundings, he turned back at last. Somewhere near him he knew, somewhere perhaps not a biscuit toss away, measured by distance in the open air, lay a dark cloistered space, the chamber of tortures, grim in its secrets, its floor perhaps piled with broken bones, its walls perhaps hung full of the old machinery for parting flesh and soul in lingering agony. Was it indeed true that the lost souls in that hidden chamber had wiped out the trace of it and left the surface of all these walls alike?

Count Sachio could feel the needles and pincers of hot steel tearing at his own soul.

"Gone!" said he, to himself, "gone! And 'twas I who sent her away."

CHAPTER LXIX.

The Sacred Fire.

No intimation could come to anyone in the two rival kingdoms as to the whereabouts of those two persons of most importance in the swift drama of those days—Kitty and Count Frederick. They had disappeared uttterly and left no trace. With them had passed all hope of the solution of the riddle of the missing Gretzhoffen coin. If either of these two kingdoms should march against the other, if its armies should lay level with the earth the battlements and towers of its enemy—why, that would but bury the deeper the secret which alone animated either in the quest of conquest.

As for any offense against Grahoffen, however, what could Michael the weak have done now, with his right hand man, his ablest general, his best man of affairs, gone? He hesitated as to means of the offensive, just as his chief rival pondered the results possible, even of a successful offensive.

Meantime, the truth remained that the key to all this coil was absent, nor was she apt to return. Kitty Gray certainly must cherish a keen memory of injuries she had known on these shores. The armies of America might come back, the ships of America might anchor in these ports, their guns might exact apology or tribute—but Kitty Gray herself would not return, that was sure. Therefore affairs halted. The battle was arrested as though the sun had halted midway of the heavens in a modern Ajalon.

Yet, not so far away, as actual distance is measured, the two principals of this play still lived. Kitty and Count Frederick were separated from the rival kingdoms by not so many leagues of the sea, yet they knew not where they were more than did any of these others. The sea which stretched between the two lands was narrow enough in fact, yet potentially it lay immeasurably wide.

As to the secrets of the rival kingdoms which they had left behind, neither of these two much concerned himself. There were other things which concerned each vastly more.

When Count Frederick hastened away from the side of the sacrificial fire in the search of the woman who had come so near being its victim, he was overlooked at the moment alike by the natives who had accompanied him thither and by the inhabitants of the village which they had surprised. These were rival factions, or rival tribes upon the island, and for the time their ancient hatred made them forget the presence of the white man. They fell upon each other fiercely, and in the swift clash of arms all else was overlooked. Perhaps they remembered the potency of the white man's weapons. Their own weapons none the less would serve for a skin whose color they understood. With much cheerfulness they addressed themselves to the task of mutual mutilation.

"Look! a Sail!" Exclaimed Count Frederick.

The conflict swayed here and there, until at length the villagers seemed to have the best of the invaders. The latter now remembering their white leader, broke off toward the forest, hotly pursued by their antagonists. Thus at length they all, a mixed array of fighting men, found themselves at the brink of the cavern where but recently Count Frederick had followed the trail of Kitty Gray and her captor. They also plunged down the slope, still mingled, still fighting, so that presently there might have been heard deep within the subterranean cavern the clash of spear or shield, and the thud of war clubs against human skulls.

By this time Kitty Gray had been rescued from the immediate peril which had threatened. When Count Frederick called out, the half-witted sailor turned toward him, and hesitated half an instant. With swift instinct, Kitty's fingers found a vulnerable place in her assailant's eyes, and as he roared in pain, she pulled herself free from him and sprang down and back into the arms of Count Frederick, who caught her close, murmuring some words with whose meaning she was well content.

"My heart, my life!" he exclaimed, even as he pushed her back of him and faced the strange being from whom she had escaped.

Once more Kitty felt surge across her the feeling that after all, she was weak, and always must be weak; whereas, he, her late enemy, was strong and always would be strong. She was content to cower down behind him and leave the event to him.

The noise of the oncoming melee behind them grew in volume now as Count Frederick turned to face the shaggy figure of the man who but now had been the captor of Kitty Gray. The muzzle of the pistol pressing to his face spoke louder than any words—seemed, indeed, to restore to him a part of the reason he had lost through dwelling here among the savages, on a shore upon which he had been cast unknown years earlier. He threw up his hands now. "Avast, there, captain!" he cried. "I surrender!"

"Who are you?" demanded Count Frederick. "Or what are you?"

The half-demented creature passed a hand across his face. "Blessed if I could tell you the truth about that, sir" he said, "and that's the truth. But seems to me I remember I was once Old Jimmy Wainwright of the ship Adventure, out of Clyde. It's maybe we were cast away somewhere, years since, and I'm thinking Adam was then a boy. Belay all! Friend, captain, your honor, don't shoot old Jimmy Wainwright, if so be I am him."

"But what are you doing down here, under the earth, man?"

"Captain, your honor, sir, I came here to live safe. I kill some of them black folks once in a while. They think I'm crazy, and maybe they're right. How can I tell, captain, your honor, sir?"

"You know this place?" exclaimed Frederick. "Thus far we are safe, but listen to them coming."

"Ay, ay, sir; fighting like cats and dogs. They always do. We must cut and run, or they'll kill us all, and put us in the big fire yonder. Don't I know? I've seed sights a plenty, up there. I couldn't a-beared to seen the white lady burned."

"Lead on!" said Frederick, quickly. "We must hide, or it will be too late."

"This way, captain, your honor, sir! And bear a hand lively!"

Count Frederick and Kitty Gray followed him as he fled deeper into the cavernous interior of the lava hill. They turned corner after corner, until at length the sounds of the pursuit became fainter and died away far at the rear.

"'Ere's my 'ome, sir," began the old sailor at last, as they paused before a rude cabin, which showed some animal-like proof of human occupancy. "We'll be safe 'ere, I'm thinking."

But they were not safe for long. The keen instinct of the savage trailers, hot in the blood lust which now possessed them, brought them on ultimately along the trail, and to its end. They heard the savage shouts of their pursuers gaining in volume, heard the thud of their bare feet on the rocky floors. A moment, and the yelling band stood before the entrance to their cavern.

The natives were spearmen, and their shafts were cast with strength and accuracy. Those beleaguered ones had no shields with which to parry such weapons, and yet for one instant a barrier was offered to the assault.

With a savage, half-animal roar, the old sailor—whose full history never was to be known—cast himself in front of his new friend, opposing his shaggy breast to the leveled spears. He fell pierced by a dozen shafts, still roaring his defiance. Above his body now spoke again and again the weapon of Count Frederick. A half dozen dusky forms fell and filled up the opening. The savages behind gave back and sought to flee.

This instant of their hesitation gave Frederick one more opportunity. Catching Kitty by the arm he passed back to the rear of the little cavern in the hope there might be egress that way—for surely the wall of steel in front could not be passed. He found it—a narrow passageway. Panting and breathless, stumbling, falling and rising, the two hurried on until at length they heard no more in their ears the din of fighting.

The passage way now seemed gradually to rise, its walls closing in. At length, far ahead, they saw a faint tinge of light. It deepened as they advanced, until at length it became visible through a broken aperture beyond which shone the full light of day. Gasping their joy at this, they hurried up and on until at length their feet stood upon the surface of that earth to which they had been accustomed.

It was a strange and new scene which lay before them now. There was no path that they could see—the mouth of the cavern came out at the top of a high cliff. Far below them ran the sea, blue-tinged and rippling out to its horizon. But no sail broke the wide expanse, no path showed down the steep declivity which lay before them. Their case seemed quite as hopeless as ever it had been. If discovered now, they must indeed stand at bay.

The keen eye of Count Frederick searched here and there for some avenue of escape, but at first found none.

"Mademoiselle," said he, 'the beach below, no doubt, leads to one of their villages. But we cannot reach the beach. I presume that we have come almost through the hill—that the main village lies yonder, beyond the forest. If we return, whether by the cavern or by the sea beach, it would mean only death. If only we could find come other place of concealment!"

"Look!" said Kitty, and pointed beyond, at the base of the cliff. A narrow, slitlike aperture showed in the rock wall. "Perhaps there is another cave," said she.

"Hurry," said Count Frederick. "Run and hide yourself there at once."

As she obeyed he set about certain plans of his own. He flung himself down upon the sand at the edge of the cliff, and left a trail, as though he had been flung over and down. Here and there he pulled loose certain shrubs to strengthen that impression in the mind of any pursuer who might come. Then, retreating toward the mouth of the cave where Kitty had secreted herself, he obscured his own trail in the sand as best he could by brushing away the footprints with a broken bough, trusting to the strong wind to complete his own bungling work at covering his trail.

"Mademoiselle," said he, when at length he joined her. "We now have done all that we can do. We have no food, no water, no weapons—" he showed his empty revolver. "All we can do is to wait and hope."

Cowering in their hiding place, they lay for what might have been an hour before they heard the voices of any pursuers. Then they saw emerge along their old passageway the figures of several of the natives, who stood jabbering, weapons in hand, looking this way and that, seemingly too much excited to have much care. One of these ran to the broken trail mark at the edge of the bluff, and, shouting in excitement, returned. With no more ado, and apparently without suspecting the actual trail of the two fugitives, they all now made off to the right, shouting loudly, and disappeared from view—no doubt along some steep path known only to themselves.

"They have gone," said Count Frederick, "and I fancy will not return. They think us dashed to death on the rocks below."

"We might as well be," said Kitty Gray, apathetically. "What hope is there for us now?"

"Courage, mademoiselle!" was his response. "That we have lived through such perils means that there is a purpose for it—one purpose."

"No, said Kitty Gray. "It has been too much. We are lost. There is no food, no water. Even if there were what chance is there for an escape?"

"Even should there never be an escape, mademoiselle, life here with you would be better than life anywhere else in the world without you."

But, utterly worn out, she only shook her head and turned away. Completely exhausted, at length she fell asleep. He spread about her his own coat and kept watch.

Night came at length, and with it its chilling airs. They must have fire, yet a fire might announce their presence there. Count Frederick gathered some bits of dried wood here and there, and at length ventured to build a fire where it would offer warmth within the cave, and where it would be practically invisible from any direction except from the sea. Indeed, he felt that they must take this chance, since only from the sea could they have any hope of escape. Their beacon light would shine widely, and perhaps some passing mariner might see it.

The night wore away, passed as it was in hunger and in chill, with nothing to soften the hard floor of the rocky cavern. There was no breakfast for them, there was not even a drop of water to assuage their growing thirst.

Once more Count Frederick searched out every corner of their narrow refuge ground. To attempt escape directly down the face of the cliff would have been sheer madness. He followed the trail which the natives had made when they passed to the right along the rock wall. Apparently they had descended by swinging from one tree trunk to another. It would be equal to madness for a woman to attempt a descent here—still more hopeless for a woman weakened with hunger and fatigue. He told Kitty the truth, as he now found it.

"Leave me," said she, weakly. "Save yourself."

"Leave you, mademoiselle?" said he. "Never! Not until death do us part shall we be separated."

He read something of his answer in the look in the eyes turned upon him now.

"It is well," said she at length, simply—"we shall live or die—together."

"Together, mademoiselle? Tell me—"

But her hand, raised in sheer weariness, arrested him, calling upon all his chivalry.

"We will be able to endure our hunger for a day, at least," said he. "Our light shines far. Let us devote at least another day to hope. If none comes, why, then we can die."

"Yes," said she, simply, "that comes at last to all. But let us try to hope!"

They faced a second night, endless in length, and faced another dawn—at first they thought a hateful dawn, and no more kind than the night had been. But even as this feeling of apathetic resentment grew in their souls, Kitty Gray raised her lusterless eyes as she heard an exclamation from her companion.

"Look!" exclaimed Count Frederick. "Look! A sail!"

She stared out over the sea. There lay the dearest object that could meet her eyes—a low white fleck, or dot, rising and falling, just inside the rim of the distant horizon. Yes, it was a sail!

"Quick! The fire!" she cried. "We must build the fire!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Broken Coin

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by Grace Cunard

(Copyright, 1915, By Wright A. Patterson)

Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

TWENTIETH INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER LXX.

The Broken Treaty.

In the palace of Gretzhoffen, King Michael's friends and courtiers, King Michael's officials, at last began slowly to recover from the period of dissipation into which they had plunged as an expression of their relief from the armed menace so recently at their walls. There is a limit to human possibilities in joy, in grief, in exaltation of any kind, even alcoholic. King Michael and his court ceased to drink because they could drink no more—the wine cup had ceased to furnish any fillip to their besotted brains.

Alone among all these others the prime minister of Gretzhoffen retained somewhat of his wits. Perhaps a stout heredity made him more impervious to the inroads of excess, or perhaps he had certain ambitions of his own which cannily suggested to him that it were better to remain in possession of all his faculties. At least he was the first to call a halt in the carouse and to take some account of events past and future.

He looked about him at the wreck which had been wrought in the palace by its inmates—wellnigh as complete as that lately done by its enemies—looked at the stained rugs—the broken furniture, the disordered tables. His gaze passed by all this to rest upon the stupefied guests, of whom he now proceeded to make quick clearance.

Michael himself made no protest at this, for he knew little of what went on about him. On his mind still rested the obsession that he was celebrating a great victory of the Gretzhoffen arms and the Gretzhoffen diplomacy. To him, therefore, the prime minister now addressed himself in the hope of some partial restoration of order, some semblance of a government. Always he missed the strong mind and the strong arms of Count Frederick, now so mysteriously disappeared.

Across the narrow neutral lands which divided these two kingdoms, yonder in the capital of Grahoffen, a quite different state of affairs held place. No dissipation for old Cortislaw, and no celebration for any victory not actually in hand. Cortislaw planned war. As for his pledged word in the armistice and the later treaty, he had long since cast to the winds all this as a scrap of paper carrying no value whatever. Cortislaw signed treaties only to get something afterward. He had signed this one merely as a temporary expedient to extricate himself from a dangerous situation. That being done, the world began all over again for Cortislaw.

In due time Sachio returned from his bootless search in the vaults below the Gretzhoffen palace. He was full of apprehension, but none the less must face his sovereign.

"Your majesty," he began, when at length that dreaded interview was no longer to be evaded. He hesitated, and as he did so his monarch guessed his news was none too good.

"Well, well, Sachio, what is it that my majesty is to hear?" demanded Cortislaw. "More bad news? You have not won the secret—you have lost our last opportunity?"

"Sire, it is true! Thus far I have failed. But still—"

"You ask more time! Do you think time is as inexhaustible as a river? Let me tell you, it passes, with our hopes, with wings. Time—more time?—that is what you cannot have!"

"But, your majesty—"

"Away with you, Sachio! I have parleyed with you for the last time. If I did not need you as an officer, your head indeed should hang on our gates as a warning to other failures."

"How can I serve your majesty?" asked Sachio humbly, glad enough to feel his head safe on his shoulders for yet another hour.

"Call out our army! Mobilize at once to the last man! See that the guns are ready with full ammunition trains. Call in the officers at once. See to it also that the ships are ready. We will attack at once by land and sea. Get you at once to the department of our navy, when you have finished your orders for the land forces. We must move at once."

"Whither, your majesty?"

"Where else, if not against Gretzhoffen? If you could not find their secret at your leisure, I will blow down their towers and look among the ruins myself for whatever secrets they may hold. The gods of my ancestors would not let them rest in their graves if I accepted this situation as it rests for us today."

A certain relief came to the soul of Sachio as he heard these words. He was a soldier, and he reasoned that now in the opportunity for arms he might win back something of his lost favor.

"It is well, your majesty," said he. "I shall carry your word at once to all the different departments. Your men are but waiting to follow you. Success will be easy for us now, for we know all their defenses now as well as our own. We shall win!"

"Yes," said Cortislaw, "we shall win, if it costs the life of every man, woman and child of this kingdom. I take charge now myself and trust no more boasters like certain advisers I could name. I grant you your place in your regiment, once more, Sachio. See if you can fail in that! If your men give back, I'll have my own guns of the guard behind them to blow them off the earth."

"Be not too hard upon me, your majesty! I admit my error in allowing that young girl to leave our shores—she could have told us the secret had she liked—all the secret of the Gretzhoffen coin. But we shall win yet, though at greater cost."

"You had your chance, Sachio. You did not handle the woman. Well, I thought you knew more."

"To handle a woman, your majesty," said Sachio—"who ever knew enough for that?" I confess my fault and stand ready to pay my share of the added cost. True, we should have kept her until we had all she knew. 'Tis doubtful if she ever sees our shores again. We may see the face of some American admiral—see their battleships before our port—but as for her—never!"

"It is enough," said Cortislaw. "We march. We advance no more clinging to woman's skirts. It is our guidons now shall lead us to their city's secrets."

CHAPTER LXXI.

The Rescue.

Those whose disappearance had made such havoc in the plans of a principality now likewise were upon the point of certain changes in their own plans—and counted that any change must be for the better.

"Look!" said Kitty as they stood at the crest of the cliff gazing out over the white-topped waves toward the nodding sails of the rapidly-advancing craft. "A two-master, under heavy sail. Auxiliary, no doubt. What can she be?"

"It is what I also would ask," said Count Frederick at her side studying the craft as intently. "Whatever it be, it is our only hope. See, she seems to have the look of a yacht. Watch her bows as they rise and see how her spars rake back. A yacht—but whose, and what nationality?"

"There comes their flag," said Kitty, "British! Well, I wish it were the flag of my own country, but better that than none."

"We shall be safe enough under the Union Jack," said Frederick. "I count on good treatment when they find out who we are."

She turned to him with a curious look upon her face.

"Say rather when they find out who you are, Count Frederick," said she. "You are a nobleman, I am an unknown American girl, cast away without a friend on earth."

He smiled at her as though amused. "An American girl who has had place in the plans of two kingdoms. Perhaps you may not always remain so unknown, if it comes to that."

"Look!" Once more was her reply as she pointed to the boat.

A puff of smoke came from the bow of the yacht, followed presently by the dull boom of the small cannon mounted there.

"They see our signal," said Count Frederick. "Yes, she'll round to and send in a boat, no doubt." And indeed such proved to be the plans of the little vessel.

There were other results of the cannon shot which might not have been suspected. The natives, scattered here and there along the beach, in the forest, or in their village, were seized with a sudden terror of what they imagined to be a new enemy. As fast as they could they scuttled for shelter in the woods or in the caverns that lay below the hills, the greater number finding refuge in the latter hiding places. Of these, some made their way in their terror quite through the series of caverns until at length they emerged at the crest of the cliff by a way of the passage which had brought Frederick and Kitty there at an earlier time.

These found the summit of the rock already occupied. The two strangers who had caused all the turmoil in the village stood at the summit looking out at the sea, and waving signals to the incoming vessel. For an instant the natives stood irresolute, but it was not for long. They identified these two white strangers, whoever or whatever they might be, alike with these past disturbances and these new terrors. Whereupon with savage shouts they once more fell upon the unfortunates and made them prisoners again.

To the left, across a bare ledge of rock which showed no trace of it, there led a path whose presence Frederick had not suspected. It was down this new passageway that the natives now led Kitty and Count Frederick. They passed down a steep declivity covered with trees and at length found their way to the lower beach, where after a time they were joined by others who cautiously had emerged from their hiding places. It plainly was the purpose of all these now to complete the sacrifice which had been arrested by the escape of the victim a few days ago. They inflicted preliminary indignities upon them, at least, whether with the intention of hurrying them to the sacrificial fire, or of obliging them to interpose betwen the natives and these new invaders—who, as now all could see, also were white people and hence to be dreaded.

Much of these operations was easily visible from the yacht's deck. Apparently there were some commands from the man who stood at the bow, binoculars in hand. Overboard went a pair of boats manned by stout oarsmen who swept them quickly toward the shore.

The man with the binoculars saw two figures on the beach, easily distinguishable from the savage ones around them. One was a man, and the other a boy, at first he thought. "White," he muttered to himself. "Refugees—castaways of some sort on this coast. How did they get here, I wonder? But by Jove! my fellows are giving the natives all they want, I'm thinking."

Such, indeed, was the case. The sailor men plunged through the surf as their keels touched bottom and came on at a run, rifles in hand and firing as they came, with the effect that half a dozen of the savages fell.

"Send This!" Exclaimed Count Frederick. "If You Cut In on Anything Else I'll Kill You!"

The others scattered like sheep and left the captives standing there dazed, yet happy at their deliverance. The petty officer in charge of the landing came up to Count Frederick and saluted. He seemed to recognize in him, tattered as he was, a man of former authority. "How do you do, your honor?" said he. "We came just in time."

"Yes, my men, and we thank you. Who are you?"

"Private Yacht Princess, Liverpool registry, owned by Arthur Wyndham. He's on board, sir—shall we take you off?"

"Certainly, as quickly as possible. But have you any water in the boat? We have had none for more than two days."

The sailor turned toward the speaker's companion whose garb was scarce that of a lady, but whose form and features surely seemed such.

"Do you mean to say that this young lady?—" he began.

"Yes, she has not had a bite to eat nor a drop of water in two days."

"Come quick, sir, then. We've a water breaker in our longboat. Have you anything to fetch along?"

Count Frederick laughed at this and even Kitty smiled.

"You see us as we are," said Count Frederick. "We were castaways here, shipwrecked from the steamer Adler."

"Oh, yes, we heard of that. I see, I see—it is most fortunate we came this way."

"How far must that have been from shore where she went down?"

"Perhaps a hundred and seventy-five miles from her port of departure. You're half that distance, here, from where she went down, as near as we can tell. No other survivors have been picked up so far as we heard. How have you got on here?"

Count Frederick shrugged his shoulders. "They'd have burned us both if you had not come. If you had not seen us we'd have starved."

"Handsome luck, sir! But who are you, if I may ask?"

"You may take us aboard," said Count Frederick with dignity. "You said your owner's name was—"

"Wyndham, sir; Mr. Arthur Wyndham of Hants."

He touched his hat now and led the way to the boatside where ready hands offered water to the two famished castaways.

On board the Princess Mr. Arthur Wyndham, owner of the boat and her cargo, solid or spirituous—he had been perhaps more devoted to the latter portion these last few days—still stood with his glasses at his eyes. "By Jove!" said he, "that boy is a girl, and the girl is a young woman, bless my eyes!"

Not displeased at this, he greeted the two newcomers at the ship's ladder when the boat brought them alongside.

"Well done, Parsons," said he to his boat steerer. "I saw you bag a half dozen of those beggars. And who are these new friends of ours? I am delighted if we have saved you from a bit of bad luck yonder. Neither of you hurt, I trust?"

He talked to Count Frederick, but he looked at Kitty Gray.

"Fortunately not," replied Count Frederick. "I understand we are meeting Mr. Arthur Wyndham."

"Quite right sir. You are refugees here?"

"No, sir, we are shipwrecked passengers of the Adler, lost at sea."

"Indeed, a shocking accident—no survivors reported. Most fortunate I sailed this way."

"This is Miss Kitty Gray," said Count Frederick, casting a keen eye upon his host and taking some reckoning of his evident late conviviality. "She is American. As for me, I am a citizen of the kingdom of Gretzhoffen."

Mr. Arthur Wyndham gathered no great sense of the speaker's importance. His eyes were fixed upon Kitty Gray rather too covetously. "So you got away when she struck?" he went on carelessly.

"She did not strike," corrected Count Frederick, "she was blown up by an accident."

"Too bad, too bad—well, well. But I say, perhaps the young lady would like to change? There may be some sort of woman's togs in the cabin below. My sister comes aboard once in a while, you know!" And he essayed a portentous wink aside at Count Frederick.

"That will be agreeable, I am sure," replied Count Frederick quietly, "and if you could send down to the young lady's cabin a bit to eat and a carafe of water, I am sure it will be appreciated. She has had neither food nor drink for more than two days, sir."

"Nor has he—my friend," said Kitty Gray, smiling faintly.

"God bless my soul!" said Mr. Wyndham. "I never thought of that. Send you down some wine—send you down a brace of stout if you like, I can recommend it—my father makes it, don't you see."

Count Frederick, liking his new surroundings only by comparison with those he recently had left, signed to Kitty Gray and presently the two, conducted by boat stewards, departed for the cabins to which they were assigned by the owner of the boat. The latter, whether from his late imbibings or through the effect of the beautiful young girl's presence, evidently was what the French call tete montee.

CHAPTER LXXII.

The Signal.

Alone for a moment, Kitty looked hastily about to see that she was not observed. Then she drew from her bosom a crinkled bit of parchment of whose existence not even Count Frederick was aware. This was her sole souvenir, her one bit of treasure-trove from the savage island. She was not sure that it had any value. Only, curiously enough, it impressed her as being like another certain bit of parchment of which Count Sachio had robbed her. As yet she could not decipher the torn half-legible screed.

How came she by it, and why? She herself could scarcely have told why she had paused to take it from the pocket of the dead sailor in the cavern when, just before their flight, she had bethought herself that possibly he bore upon his person some proof of his identity. Thus far she had not had time to look at the soiled and crumpled bit. She concealed it now—in her mind the growing suspicion that providentially she might have been put in possession of the other half of the torn paper which Sachio had coveted! She had ceased to wonder at fortune's caprices now and soon indeed all thought of this torn parchment was banished from her mind. She forgot that possibly it also spoke of broken coins or treasure chambers, or other things of ancient history in these lands whose very stones had stories could they but tell them.

Restored somewhat by food and drink, and having regained a trifle of her self-respect by the donning of some woman's garments which she found in the cabin, Kitty Gray's buoyant spirits began once more to assert themselves. As she loked at her face in the little mirror she spoke half aloud the resolution which she saw in the reflected features.

"I'm not going to England," said she. "I'm not going to America. I'm going back to Gretzhoffen, till my work is done! Surely they will put us down at that port—it is as near as any. Then—we shall see."

An hour later she returned to the deck to make her duties to her host more completely—little as she had been impressed by his personality or his conduct, which later she was ready to stigmatize as odious.

She met Count Frederick, much improved by a change to a well-fitting suit of flannels which he had found. He smiled now happily at seeing her.

"You're looking ripping, mademoiselle!" said he. "I did not see you have that frock, on the island yonder."

"Nor did I notice that your trousers were so well pressed there!" retorted she.

At this moment Wyndham joined them. "I was just saying to Mr. Wyndham," said Count Frederick, "that we owed him a very great debt of gratitude, and that you—"

"Quite the other way about, I assure you," said Mr. Arthur Wyndham, the brewer's son, as he pressed somewhat too warmly the hand which Kitty extended him. "It is I who am the debtor. I swear, I never saw one change so much!"

His gaze, which passed over Kitty in her new apparel, was quite too languishing. Kitty Gray made such conversation as she could. Unconsciously she drifted to the side of Count Frederick, and finding herself there, wondered why she had done so. Once more she was alone, at the mercy of men. There was not another woman on this boat. But now, if it came to a choice, she knew which of these two men she would elect as her protector.

Count Frederick made some excuse and departed presently, so that Kitty found herself alone with Wyndham. She liked little enough the ardor of the gaze which he bent upon her now, and arose to leave him.

"You will excuse me?" said she. "I have forgotten something."

But as she turned she heard him stride suddenly toward her, felt his hand upon her arm.

"No, no!" said he. "Wait—why do you go? Finding you here—such a woman—saving your life and all that—do you think I am a man of stone—do you think—?"

"I think you must excuse me," said Kitty Gray, icily.

"But you just said you owed a debt of gratitude."

"That any woman rescued from a peril owes to any gentleman."

"Oh, I say, come now!" he rejoined. "How about a little kiss to the honest sailor who was lucky enough to save your life! It's far from home or help, and no one knows—I say, now—"

She sprang from him with a startled scream, a name upon her lips which came readily enough when she needed aid.

Count Frederick heard her. He came at speed—and arrived just in time to see Mr. Wyndham pursuing his amorous advances to the extent of casting an arm about Kitty as she would have fled. The sight was enough. Without pausing for any question he sprang forward and sent Wyndham reeling against the corner of the cabin with one swift sweep of his arm. With the other arm he pushed Kitty away. An instant, and he had joined her and was half carrying her toward the door.

Sudden wrath now seized the soul of this gentleman lately atuned to softer emotions. "Stop!" he called out. His hand found a bell. The sound of quick footsteps came on the deck and men of the crew appeared at the door.

"Take him away?" sputtered Wyndham. "Put him in irons until I call for him! He is a thief!"

Count Frederick, battling vigorously with those who laid hands upon him, disappeared at the door from which escape was now cut off for Kitty.

"Now you," said Wyndham to her, still sputtering, "you shall find out that on the sea the law of might still rules. I'll show you!"

Upon the contrary it was he, himself, who found out somewhat. The young American was as much a tigress as she had ever been in cases like this, of which she had known too many in her wanderings in these lands. She battled with him so furiously that he wondered whether between the two he was more apt to be victor or victim on his own yacht.

Frederick flung away from him, bruised and bleeding, the men who had undertaken to imprison him. A swift plan had come into his own mind. He heard the crackle of a wireless mast on the upper deck. An instant later he had sprung up the last stair and closed behind him the door of the operator's room.

At the key there sat a youth, the receivers of the equipment strapped to his ears. The crackle and roar of the wireless equipment, and the stoppers on his ears, left the operator unable to understand what was said to him; but he comprehended very quickly the language of the pistol muzzle which was shoved against his side—a pistol which he did not know was empty, but which he was quite convinced was wholly unlovely in its look.

Count Frederick bent above him and scribbled a few words on a bit of paper at the desk, his pistol against the operator's ribs.

"Send this!" said he. "If you cut in on anything else I'll kill you!"

The operator looked down at the message.

"S. O. S., Gretzhoffen," it read. "S. O. S. one hundred and seventy-five miles south by southwest. Send Adelina, Frederick. Send Adelina. S. O. S Frederick."

The operator looked up at Frederick curiously. "Who are you?" said he. "We're not sinking. I don't know Adelina."

"I'll sink you if you wink," said Count Frederick grimly. "Send! Do you hear me—send!"

Mechanically the fingers of the operator began to tap the keys. Out into the air from the antennae of the mast sprung the call: "S. O. S., Gretzhoffen . . . Adelina . . . Frederick . . ."

And even as this signal, this cry for help went out into the night, there came another cry from the lips of the helpless girl cowering in the corner of the room below. "Frederick, Frederick, come quick!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

SULPHUR AS A FERTILIZER

Experiments Conducted Seem to Prove That It Is of the Greatest Value to the Soil.

In parts of France the residue from gas works is extensively used as a fertilizer. Analysis of several samples of garden soil prove that the value of this unusual fertilizing agent is due in part to the large amount of sulphur in it, 40 per cent of sulphur and from 1 to 2 per cent of nitrogen, in the form of ammonia or its salts. Experiments in flour of sulphur are said to promote the growth of both roots and leaves and to give to the plants a deeper green color than they would have without it. Probably it helps to form chlorophyll. Moreover, some of the sulphur is oxidized and becomes sulphate in the soil.

In this relation, it may be pointed out that experiments at the University of Wisconsin have been regarded as proving that the generally prevailing theory that sulphur in the soil is of little value for promoting fertility, as compared with phosphorus and nitrogen, is erroneous and that sulphur is, in fact, of vast importance. Continuous cultivation, together with insufficient fertilization, causes a large annual loss of sulphur which cannot be compensated from the atmosphere, and little is brought up by capillarity from the subsoil. The experimenters, therefore, recommend the application of fertilizers containing sulphur to lands which are frequently cropped. The failure hitherto to recognize the great value of sulphur in the soil is ascribed to faulty analytic methods employed by early investigators.

Endless Battle.

Look around today. Lo, here and now in our civilized society, the old allegories yet have a meaning, the old myths are still true. Into the Valley of the Shadow of Death yet often the path of Duty leads; through the streets of Vanity Fair walk Christian and Faithful; and on Greatheart's armor ring the clanging blows. Ormuzd still fights with Ahriman—the Prince of Light with the powers of darkness. He who will hear, to him the clarions of the battle call.

How they call, and call, and call, till the heart swells that hears them! Strong soul and high endeavor, the world needs them now. Beauty still lies imprisoned, and iron wheels still go over the good, the true and the beautiful that might spring from human lives.

And they who fight with Ormuzd, though they may not know each other—somewhere, sometime, will their muster roll be called.—Henry George.

Sought Information.

As illustrating the haziness of conception which prevailed years ago as to what and where the Philippines were, Dean Worcester tells in his book, "The Philippines, Past and Present," of a good old lady who came to him on his first return from the islands for a bit of information. "Deanie," she said, "are them Philippians you have been a-visitin' the people that Paul wrote the Epistle to?"

Explaining the Carving.

Antiquaries are well acquainted with the ancient church at Barfreston, near Canterbury, England, and during the summer many tourists visit the church. Round the Norman doorway is a quaint carving representing a hare being hunted by hounds. One day a visitor asked the sexton what was the meaning of the carving.

"Oh," was the reply, "it is taken out of Scripture. It's on the text: 'This is the 'are; come, let us kill him.'"

The BROKEN COIN by EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

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Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

TWENTY-FIRST INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER LXXIII.

The Encounter at Sea.

Over the sea, up into the stars, sped the distress call of the ship at sea: "S. O. S. Gretzhoffen! S. O. S. Gretzhoffen!"

Broken, incoherent at times, but imperative, the strident wail of the wireless clamoring out into the empty air, asking for ears far away to listen to what it said. And ears did hear—the ears of friends.

The prime minister of Gretzhoffen, as has been said, had by this time succeeded in making some sort of a clearance of the unwelcome guests of the Gretzhoffen palace. He had got the king to bed, some of his officers to horse, and a few of his servants to work. As for himself, he felt himself unable to establish the broken machinery of the government on any lasting basis. Frederick—Count Frederick—the man with the strong brain and arm—where was he?

Bent upon answering for himself this somewhat imperative question, the prime minister made search here and there for some clue to the missing nobleman. His agents ran the trail to the dock whence Count Frederick had sailed so many days ago. He learned that at the time the king's yacht had put out there had been seen the line of smoke of a passing steamer, far below, toward the mouth of the bay. Apparently the king's yacht had set out with the purpose of intercepting this steamer. What then had happened none could tell. Somewhere out on the sea the nobleman of Gretzhoffen had disappeared.

Therefore, said the prime minister to himself, it might well be true that Count Frederick, having been gone a certain period of time, might now be ready to return. These long absences were usual with him, but always he had come back. Hitherto that had meant his return by land. Now it must mean his return by sea. It might be quite as well, reasoned the prime minister, to have one of the earliest interviews with Count Frederick on his return. It was well, surely, to be well established with those who would take control of affairs in the distracted kingdom of Gretzhoffen.

"I shall even take our other yacht, the Adelina," said the prime minister to himself, "and put myself in the way of the royal yacht, should it now be returning." And even so he did.

The Adelina was a stout little steaming craft, of good lines, and well enough armed.

The prime minister did not hasten in his errand, for indeed he had no definite purpose in view. Only, having put the Adelina into commission, he pushed out quite beyond the bay, until he felt the long roll of the Mediterranean under him. Then, as it chanced, at a point not so far from the late shipwreck of the Prinz Adler, he slackened speed and kept himself barely under way. Having nothing better to do, he waited.

It was night now, and the stars were shining brightly above. The gentle airs of the South European sea were soft and languorous. But, to the prime minister, as he restlessly paced the deck of the Adelina, these things were lost. He was engaged in reflections of none too pleasant a nature. Sighing, he said to himself: "There is no use in this. I might as well put back."

He turned as the boat's wireless operator hastened to him now, a paper in his hand. He had not noticed the crackle of his own wireless masts of late, although from time to time he had sent out signals in the hope of striking somewhere some information regarding the missing craft.

"I beg pardon, sir," said the messenger excitedly, "but we have just got an S. O. S. Someone is calling the Adelina."

"Calling us—where is it—who is it?" demanded the prime minister.

"They are calling Gretzhoffen and signing 'Frederick.' It is S. O. S.—they are in trouble somewhere. Who is it, excellency?"

The prime minister started as though struck by an electric shock. "Frederick! Who but the very man I want—Count Frederick—and calling us! Tell me—what is it that he says?"

"Only the same thing, excellency—'S. O. S.—Gretzhoffen—Adelina—Frederick.' And, yes—he says 'One hundred and seventy-five miles south-southwest.'"

"One hundred and seventy-five miles—that, of course, must mean from the port whence he sailed. We are more than half of that where we lie now—we cannot be more than forty miles from him this minute."

"Easily within that, excellency. The stuff comes awfully strong—they are close, that is sure."

"Send the captain at once," ordered the official.

The captain came and learned this news also. At once the bow of the yacht was headed toward this call, which came down out of the stars imploringly, urging speed.

That was what the night called out with its mysterious voice. The quick wit of Count Frederick had availed in this emergency in which he found himself. He knew that the Adelina would be in commission. He hoped that someone might be found to take command. He knew that any aid which came, must come soon.

The Adelina now swung in full speed, her engines purring softly in a continuous roll as she took up her top gait, and held it steadily. Always the call came, "S. O. S.—Gretzhoffen—S. O. S.—Gretzhoffen." For, as a matter of fact, although left long since in his own den on the upper deck, the operator of the Princess had dutifully done what he had been bidden to do.

They plowed on into the starry night for some time. At length an exclamation came from the captain to the official who stood at his side on the bridge.

"I see her!" said he. "Dead ahead, and coming on at a good clip herself. Screaming bloody murder. Well, well, we will see in a couple of jiffies what it is all about. She's not sinking—she's not on fire—what's wrong there?"

Meantime, on board the Princess such confusion reigned that at the time none saw the swift approach of the Adelina. The owner of the Princess was busy with his late prisoners. Count Frederick was once more assailed when he attempted to leave the wireless room—where, as has been said, the operator still held to his task, wholly ignorant, naturally, that his call to Gretzhoffen had been answered thus swiftly. Indeed, Frederick and Kitty both found themselves in desperate plight enough, for one of them was outnumbered, and the other overpowered.

But now there came the calling of men on deck, and the rush of feet as they ran here and there. Even Wyndham, engaged in his drunken sport of hectoring the weak girl who cowered helpless and terrified in his own room, at length left her and came on deck.

By this time Frederick had once more broken free of the men who had attacked him, and had himself reached a place on deck whence he could see the outline of the oncoming boat. The searchlight of the Adelina swept the decks of the Princess. Back of it could be seen little except the loom of her rigging. But now came the flash of a shot and its plunge into the sea dead ahead of the Princess.

"Good bless us!" exclaimed Wyndham, almost sobered now at this. "They are firing on us—firing on the British flag. It's not done, you know!"

"But it is done, sir," said the executive officer at his elbow, when a second shot carried away a part of the bowsprit of the Princess. "Round to, or she will sink us."

"They are damned pirates!" said Wyndham. "I'll not have it."

"Pirates or not, sir," said the executive officer, "they will sink us if we don't round to."

The next instant he took the matter into his own hands. The engine bells clanged below. The ship slackened speed, stopped, and lay rolling in the sea. By this time the boats of the Adelina were putting out, well packed with marines. They swarmed aboard now without invitation, and appeared eminently ready for any business that might be offered.

"Who are you?" demanded Wyndham. "What do you mean by boarding my boat?"

"What do you mean by sending a wireless, sir?" demanded the officer of marines. "You called us, and we are here. What is wrong?"

"I will tell you what is wrong," broke in Count Frederick here, pushing his way forward. "We are two prisoners here—a young lady and myself. We have been mishandled, both of us, by this ruffian here. He ordered me in irons for no reason in the world except to give him better his own way with this young lady. He is neither officer nor gentleman. Having no means of reckoning with him, I, myself, ordered the wireless sent out to Gretzhoffen. I called you on my own responsibility. We needed help, and we thank God you have come."

The master of the Princess now stood crestfallen, much of his bravado gone. "I meant nothing," said he.

"I will forget it all, captain, if you let me go—although we ought to blow you out of the water," said Frederick, "and all like you. You are not fit to fly any flag, least of all the good one that you disgrace. Clear out with you, and leave these waters. If you show again we will sink you without an instant's hesitation."

"Who are you?" demanded Wyndham suddenly, impressed by the force of these words.

"I am Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen, of the king's cabinet, and his general in chief as well," said Count Frederick. "This is the government boat for which I called. Aboard it yonder is the prime minister of our kingdom. We are a small people, sirrah, but we do not lack spirit. Send for your own ships if you like, and blow down our walls—you are a stronger people than ours. But we will see them fall before we will humble ourselves to such as you. As to what you have done—say one word more, and we will sink you and take our chances with your flag."

Count Frederick, having thus spoken, turned away, and paid no more attention to the master of the Princess.

"Come," said he to Kitty, when at last he had found her.

In a few moments the two were on board the yacht of their own country—or at least that of Count Frederick. With a final shot of defiance to the craft from which they now had escaped, the Adelina again got under way and swept a wide curve around, heading back for the port of Gretzhoffen. The Princess, soon hull-down in the distance, made her way off as best she liked, to be held thereafter only in a contemptuous memory.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

The King of All Countries.

Count Frederick signified to the prime minister that affairs of state were little to his liking at this time, and that he desired to be alone. On the deck of the Adelina, therefore might now be seen but two persons—Count Frederick and Kitty Gray. They

"The Other Half of the Coin," Exclaimed Kitty.

sat near the rail, both silent, the girl looking out over the rippling sea, across which the good boat now was leaping on her homeward way.

"Mademoiselle," said he softly, his hand falling on hers as it lay on the rail, "mademoiselle—"

She stirred—moved—but did not withdraw the hand. Still she looked out across that sea beyond whose waves lay her own country, so very far away.

"Mademoiselle," said he once more, "see, we are going home."

She half turned to him at this—though still her hand lay under his.

"Soon," said she at length, sighing. "I must be going." Her voice had no elation in it after all.

"Going, mademoiselle, where?" rejoined Count Frederick.

"Home, across the sea. It has all been like a dream. I wonder if I am awake, if I am alive."

"I thank heaven that you are both, mademoiselle. As to your return, how can that be?"

"My work is done here. I have no reason for remaining."

"No reason, mademoiselle? Our work is but beginning—I say, our work. Mademoiselle—Katharine—you know, you surely know!"

He could see the color rise in the cheek turned away from him, but she made no answer.

"Oh," he went on rapidly, "I know—do I not know? Some power drove us on—some good purpose was under your coming here—it was some plan of fate which brought you. As you have said, the coin itself spoke with its broken tongue. All the time it has been crying out, endeavoring to speak—to tell what was hid—to tell us, mademoiselle, what was right."

"Yes," said she, slowly. "Liberty—justice—that was the message that it meant, perhaps. Those were the buried treasures which so long have been lost to this people."

"Yes! But we have found them all—we own the key to all of them now—as we like we may use all these for the good of this country. Yonder weak king must go. The people! I see now that the king is for their use, not they for his! To serve wisely and justly—mademoiselle, it was you who taught me the beauty of that ambition!"

Silence fell again. She did not speak. She dreaded to hear what yet she longed to hear.

"The treasure of the king, buried so long, mademoiselle—yes! But one treasure which also now I have found! Love, mademoiselle—that is what I have found, the greatest treasure of them all. It was buried in my heart, I know not how long. I never knew it. Its secret was hidden. It is but now that I myself have found it. Ah, had I the key to that as well, I should be the happiest man in all the world."

She still gazed out across white-tipped, rippling waves. Her face softened, but what he saw now on her cheek was a tear, stealing down below her lashes! Grieved, he himself could not speak. At last she turned to him.

"I am so sorry!" said she.

"For what, mademoiselle? You know I love you, that I never will love again. Is not that the truth itself? Can you doubt it? Doubt me, fail to believe my every word and I will go. You shall not see me again."

It was like him thus boldly to challenge fate. But she only shook her head.

"I cannot," said she. "I wish I could."

"But you cannot?"

He had her hands in his now. And now she turned her face toward him.

"You shall never deny the truth, my dear," said he. "All my life I shall challenge you to deny me and my love. When you can, when I have been unfaithful to you, life ends for me. But between now and then, long years of happiness lie—long years of love—long, happy, useful years."

"Happy? Useful? Yes, for you, perhaps, but how for me? You cannot come to my country. How can I stay here? What place is there for me?"

He took her face now between his hands and looked her fair in the eyes—eyes now filled with tears.

"But," said she, "was it fair—was it fair to make me love you—when I could have no hope—to make me love you—and then to send me away?"

"Send you away! That should never be. If need be, I also would go."

"And leave your duty—your place here? Then I should not love you."

"Then you do!"

In spite of the tears in her face, Kitty Gray suddenly smiled with a miraculous sweetness. "I am American," said she. "We have a fable of one George Washington. I am like him—I cannot tell a lie!"

All her answer now was inarticulate. He caught her in his arms and for the moment neither of them cared what the past had been, what the future might be.

"Fate has spoken!" said she. "If only it were right that we might be together—I should spend my life in trying to make you happy, too, Sir Frederick. But you cannot go with me—that would be wrong, and how can I remain here? You forget I am an American. I am an alien here, and I am not of your—"

He laid a hand upon her lips, frowning. "You shall not say that word," said he. "You shall not mention rank or class—never in all your life to me. What we have won, we have won together. What we enjoy, we shall enjoy together. What of honor or rank or reward there is for me, that shall be for you as well. I will listen to nothing—I will not tolerate the thought of your leaving me now—I say, we but begin everything."

"Now, come," said he at length, firmly. "If life ended for us both now, it would not have been lived in vain. Fear not as to the future. Let it rest. Come with me."

She hesitated for yet an instant, holding back from what she feared.

"Why, in the last turn of events," said she, "you yourself might be."

"I might be what, my dear?"

"You might be king!"

"No," said he. "In the country where we will live love alone will be the king."

CHAPTER LXXV.

The Last Siege.

"Excellency," interrupted the prime minister, at length approaching the deck where Frederick still sat with the young American—"Excellency, I intrude, but perhaps—"

"What is it?" demanded the nobleman calmly. "Are they calling us from our own port?"

"Precisely that, excellency. We have a wireless call. We were summoned out, and now are summoned back again. They demand that we shall come quickly."

"What is wrong?" demanded Count Frederick, springing to his feet.

"Everything, excellency! Word has come that Grahoffen is marching against us once more—even now our city may be besieged."

For a moment Count Frederick stood silent. "I see," said he. "That faithless tyrant Cortislaw has forgot his treaty and is going to war against us when he thinks us unprepared. His traitor and spy, Sachio, has kept him well advised—I warrant that. How are they coming this time?"

"In part by land, but also in a strong fleet by sea."

"So they are attacking on what they think the weaker side of our works. Is there no such thing as faith among kings—is there nowhere honesty in all the world—is there no man of faithfulness and power any more?"

"Sire," said the prime minister, uncovering and bowing to him, "there is one such in our own country."

"Michael, our king—that man?"

"No, sire, not Michael, our king. It is none other than yourself I mean. In you only can our kingdom have any hope—that is plainer now than it has ever been in all our history. Times must change or we are undone. We must dethrone our king at last. Take the place, I beseech you, excellency, which belongs to you, the place which you only can hold, for, believe me, it is only in you that Gretzhoffen may have any hope.

"I trust that you will remember that it was myself that first made this plain to your excellency," he added, thoughtfully.

"Time for all that later," said Count Frederick hastily. "First we must get back to port and pull together such forces as we can."

"Excellency, I, myself, attempted something of that before we left," said the prime minister. "I attempted to carry out such orders as I fancied you would have given had you been there. Some of the regiments, no doubt, have assembled. The guns may be ready on our sea-front now."

"Very well. Full speed ahead then. We may not be in time."

They were but barely in time. Before the Adelina docked in Gretzhoffen port there might have been seen in the bay the smoke of the advancing fleet—the Grahoffen expeditionary force already was crowding in for the landing. At the same time, upon the opposite side of the city, the army of Grahoffen, in full force, was advancing over the route which heretofore had carried the assault. Already this column, composed of cavalry, infantry and the full artillery of Grahoffen, had passed the neutral strip, and was entering the suburbs below the castle walls of the Gretzhoffen citadel.

They came exultantly, confident of their victory, and swept on as though eager to begin the sacking of the city. And the sacking of Gretzhoffen surely had begun but for the arrival of one man.

The prime minister was right. The confidence of the people of Gretzhoffen, as much of it as was left for any one man, now rested solely in the nobleman who held so prominent a part in the country's affairs of late—Count Frederick of Gretzhoffen. Swiftly enough passed from lip to lip the news that Count Frederick had come, that he would lead the army, that he would direct the defense of the city, that his mind was organizing the resistance. And as this word passed, cheers followed it. The men flocked readily to the standards, and once more abided the shock of arms.

In this strained moment Count Sachio of Grahoffen made good his promise to his king—he fought in the front rank of his own troops, and not even the jealous eyes of Cortislaw himself could find fault with his courage or his judgment. He himself led the last assault against the walls, which finally broke through the outer defenses. The forces of Grahoffen advanced so rapidly that it seemed indeed as though Cortislaw would make good his threat to leave standing not one stone upon another in this capital of his enemy.

This was Sachio's opportunity, and he knew it—it was his crucial hour. One thought even more potent than his ambition for military glory still ruled the soul of this warlike nobleman. Sachio fought that he might gain one thing—the treasurers of the king, buried deep somewhere in this citadel. That treasure was the cause of this war. Without its discovery the war itself was worthless.

He stole away from the head of his troops as finally they broke in among the shrubbery of the palace gardens—as yet not having met the encounter of the ambushed troops of Gretzhoffen, again cunningly and effectively disposed for this purpose by the orders of Count Frederick himself.

He made his way up the palace stairs, fought through the guard which defended the entrance, and thus alone pressed toward the interior of the palace once more. As he had boasted, he knew this place as well as his own bedchamber. He rushed on through the wide hall, down the stairs to the floor below, and back to the point whence led down the galleries of the cavern's floor under the castle itself.

He smiled now grimly as he hastened. As yet he was unhurt, and as yet he was unsuspected. Once more his sanguine soul lusted for success and counted on it.

He met no opposition, heard nowhere in these portions of the palace any footfall or any voice. Thus for a moment or two he strode on—and then paused, frozen in his stride by that which confronted him.

Sachio was sure that he had seen the last of the young American. He reasoned that in all likelihood Count Frederick—of whose absence he knew quite well through his own secret agents—had joined her somewhere. He knew of the wreck of the Prinz Adler. Sachio was clear in his own mind that these two enemies of his were gone, never again to confront him.

And yet now, as though spirits summoned by his own thoughts, they stood before him—both of them—the tall nobleman and the slender, shrinking girl leaning on his arm. Yes, it was they! His enemies had arisen from the very grave to confront him.

He paused irresolute, unnerved, not believing what he saw, and for the time himself made no speech.

"What do you here, Sachio?" broke in the deep voice of his enemy, once his friend—a friend once too often betrayed.

"I came by virtue of my sword," said Sachio, boldly now, seeing that he might not evade this issue.

"By virtue of your sword only shall you escape from here, Sachio," said Count Frederick, calmly. "Stand back of me, mademoiselle, and give me reach."

In a flash the swords of the two went out and joined in the encounter. Each was an excellent swordsman, and for a moment neither had advantage. The young girl screamed in terror at the sight, for she knew the redoubtable reputation of Sachio as a swordsman, and long ere this she had selected the one whom she desired to see victor in this or any encounter.

But Count Frederick did not glance her way. His eye was still fixed on that of his opponent. Only, softly, gently, he repeated to her, "Stand back, mademoiselle. Give us room."

Sachio was full of tricks. He had no wish to waste time here, and yet knew not how to pass the blade now opposing him. Suddenly he flung up his hand to his chest as though struck, hoping to find his foe off his guard for just an instant. It did not result so. The steady point of Count Frederick lay gleaming before his breast ready to thrust. And for another reason was this subterfuge worse than a useless one for Sachio. As he caught his hand against his bosom there came from its concealment in his pocket something metallic, which fell upon the floor. It rolled but briefly, for it was not round—this piece of metal. It was a half coin.

Upon this Kitty fell with a sudden cry. She knew in a flash what was this bit of metal. She knew how Sachio must have prized it, and now how Sachio, in the luck of the game, had lost, and lost by his own hand.

Agile as a cat, the girl stooped, ran in, and emerged with the bit of metal in her hand. And still the eyes of the two fighting men dared not turn her way. Sachio laughed, and tossed over his shoulder a taunting word.

"It is worthless, mademoiselle," said he—"counterfeit—'tis nothing."

Count Frederick said nothing, but he heard her words coming to him now from behind his shoulder.

"I have got them!" she exclaimed, "both halves of the coin—they are ours—they are ours—I am going now—come quick—as soon as you can."

But the cold eye of Count Frederick never turned from the face of his adversary. He made no answer to these words, although he heard the sound of her footfalls back of him as she fled down the hall toward the interior of the caverns.

"Well, Sachio," said Count Frederick, "your trickery failed. Your attack has failed at every point. Fate fights against you, Sachio. You have lost the toss of the die. You have lost the coin."

The strong wrist of the swarthy nobleman covered his breast with his extended steel. His eyes, bold even in this extremity, met that of his opponent. But Sachio knew the die indeed was cast. He knew now that he had failed.

For one moment he edged on inch by inch, endeavoring to reach a point from which he might spring past Frederick, and so follow the fleeing girl down the passageway. But always the other edged inch by inch in front of him. Always the cold eye looked into his. Always the steady steel menaced him.

"Yes, Sachio," said Frederick, once more, coldly, "I shall kill you. Shall it be now?"

But Sachio himself suddenly closed this present encounter, suddenly deferred what he himself knew in swift consternation must be his end. With a quick sweep of his sword defending the front of his body, he sprang to one side and back. Casting down upon the floor the blade with which he had fought, he fled incontinently. Count Frederick did not pursue him. Two things prevented that. One of these was the errand to which Kitty Gray had summoned him. The other reason was Kitty Gray herself.

Turning he hastened after her, fast as he might, down the deep passages through which she but now had fled.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE BROKEN COIN

A Story of Mystery and Adventure

By EMERSON HOUGH

From the Scenario by GRACE CUNARD

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Novelized From the Motion Picture Drama of the Same Name. Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

SYNOPSIS.

Kitty Gray, newspaper woman, finds in a curio shop half of a broken coin, the mutilated inscription on which arouses her curiosity and leads her, at the order of her managing editor, to go to the principality of Gretzhoffen to piece out the story suggested by the inscription. She is followed, and on arrival in Gretzhoffen her adventures while chasing the secret of the broken coin begin.

TWENTY-SECOND INSTALLMENT

CHAPTER LXXVI.

The Treasure.

Deep within that chamber of horrors which before now had smitten the souls of both with terror, two persons were bending over in the light of the candles, which gave a faint illumination.

"It is here," said Count Frederick, glancing at the little compass which he had brought with him. "The northeast lies there—it is yonder, where sists yonder skeleton in the iron chair! That was the last guard of the king."

"What shall we do?" gasped Kitty Gray. "I dare not."

"Nonsense! my dear. Fear?—why should we feel fear? Yonder friend of ours has kept the place well and safely—seated there in his iron chair waiting so long—for us!"

Kitty Gray, pale and disturbed, still feeling a woman's terror at these grim scenes about her, spoke with solemnity in her tones. "He was waiting for liberty and justice, Sir Frederick," said she. "He shall have them. We will give all these Christian burial—shall we not?"

"Whatever you wish shall be done," said Count Frederick. "Yes, we will take all these poor victims away to their last rest and let them lie in peace. I shall seal up this cavern here."

"But come," he said; and so laid a hand on the grinning guest in the iron chair. The bony frame was confined upright by metal bands which supported it. He found the ancient chair heavy to move, but applying his great strength, at length, gently as he could, he shifted it to one side. On the floor of the chamber, formerly beneath the iron chair, there showed dimly in the dust the outline of a steel plate, an iron ring welded to its center. Count Frederick pointed. "This is the place," said he, with conviction. "It was guarded well. See here—I doubt not this is the lid which covers what is below."

Yet even his strength failed to remove the covering. He found at last a part of an old bar, pushed it through the ring and put his strength to it. A faint dust arose, the lid yielded slowly, and at last fell back with a clang upon the rocky floor. At the edge of this newly made aperture there showed the edge of another plate, close fitting.

"It runs farther," exclaimed Count Frederick. "See—look what is below!"

Kitty, overcoming her terror, bent forward with him to gaze down. "Yes, it is here," said she. "But look how much there is!"

"Softly," said her companion. "Let us open this cavern more widely. Here is the grave of a giant treasure—I had not dreamed what really it was."

Carefully he pushed in and under the edge of the bar, removing plate after plate of that which had been the covering of the treasure place. Below this, they saw a cavity filled with steel receptacles. Each was locked, clamped and banded, tight against all intrusion.

"What is here?" said Count Frederick. "Are we baffled even at the last?"

Kitty Gray cast the rays of her light here and there about her in the cavernous interior. By chance her eyes rested—indeed were drawn, fascinated, to the skeleton which sat bent forward in the iron chair. A dull gleam of something like metal caught her eye.

"Look," said she, and pointed. There, fastened by a metal band to the wrist was a key—it was half hidden between the bones of the forearm.

"Look," said Count Frederick, and held it up before her. "Cunning enough was the man who hid this treasure, and yet he left it plain for those he meant to find it."

He stooped and tried the key in the lock of the central chest of those which lay below. The next moment he had flung back the lid.

Their eyes rested upon what would have made glad the heart of any buccaneer. Gold, countless pieces of gold!

It was the lost treasure of the king!

They stood, awed, spellbound and looked down at what they saw.

"But look yonder," said Kitty, plucking at his sleeve—her hand had grasped it comfortably for many moments now, for she took comfort in the touch even of his clothing, the presence of the bulk of his body near her. "Look, Sir Frederick," said she, "what is that in this chest below?"

He bent over, casting down the gleams of his little light. What he saw was a long package of folded parchments thrust down at the side of the chest. Gently he drew it out and held it in his hands for a moment, regarding it curiously.

"I shall not open it!" said he. "With you, I feel a certain fear. I believe here is something come down to us out of the past—some message from the king. If this be so, it belongs not to me, but to the people. It must go before their duly constituted rulers."

CHAPTER LXXVII.

The Reckoning.

"Now," said Count Frederick to Kitty when at length they had reached the upper portion of the palace, "we must advance to what remains yet to be done. The ministers must be summoned. The writs must issue for the attendance of the parliament. 'Tis long since one has been convened. Michael the king—he alone has been our government—and what a government!"

They were now passing toward the central portion of the palace, having ascended from the vaults below. Absorbed—intent—Count Frederick, at least, was inattentive to aught else save the presence of the woman at his side. But now she plucked his sleeve.

"Listen!" said she, and laid a finger on her lips.

At her signal, Count Frederick softened his footsteps and walked with her stealthily. The sound of the voices engaged in whispered conversation came now to his ears. Suddenly he stepped forward, convinced, flung open a door off the main hall, and passed within unannounced. It was no time for formalities in Gretzhoffen palace now.

"So," said he, "you are here again. What, Sachio, you honor us yet by another visit? That is most kind of you! You, Grahame, you, my former bodyguard—here with this arch traitor, this liar, this treacherous snake!"

They stood, surprised as yet without plan for their defense.

"Ho, there!—the guard—the guard," cried Count Frederick, stepping back to the door.

But to his call there came no footsteps of the guard. Instead, one man came—Roleau, who for the past few moments had been in search of the two men. He hastened past Kitty as she stood, thrust himself into the room, and with Count Frederick, faced the trapped men who stood before them.

Count Sachio, with a snarl of rage sprang forward at his foe, and Roleau, with a quick motion flung himself between. He felt the iron hand of his master on his shoulder.

"Leave him to me, Roleau! Take care of the other man."

The two noblemen faced one another calmly now. Not so with Roleau. On the instant, he flung himself upon the man accosted as Grahame. The struggle was unequal and under Roleau's powerful grasp the intruder soon was helpless.

"Well," said Count Frederick; "Sachio, how shall it be? Shall I choke you with my hands?"

The man whom he accosted was one not easily dismayed. He greeted these words with a smile which showed his white teeth. His own fighting blood was up, and fear was a thing he did not know.

Suddenly his eye, rapidly glancing about the room, caught sight of a trophy of arms hung across the room. From it he caught down two swords. Bowing, he handed both, hilt forward, to Count Frederick. "At your service, monsieur," he said.

"On guard!" said Count Frederick.

Lightly, gracefully, gently, the tips of the two blades met, shivered a trifle, each feeling of the other, scarce more than a hair's breadth from its course.

The icy eye of Count Frederick cold, merciless, looked into the dark and smiling face of Sachio.

"I am going to kill you now," said Count Frederick. "Shall it be soon?"

The answer of Sachio was more than a smile. Fiercely he whipped free his blade. His knuckles up, his blade shot forward in a long and deadly lunge.

Suddenly the jaw of Count Frederick shut the tighter. None could have said that he had seen what ensued. In some fashion, the blade of the nobleman of Gretzhoffen went out, vibrating, catching in its grip the blade opposed to it. There was a wrench, a twist. The weapon of Count Sachio was torn from his hands, he stood unarmed. He stood one half moment before he felt, hissing hot through all his body, the point of his antagonist.

Count Frederick turned, not waiting to see his foe sink down, for he knew the work was done. He advanced half a pace to the man Grahame, cowering in the corner before Roleau. Him he smote across the cheek with the bloody blade, and said: "You coward and traitor, you shall go to the law."

"As for you, Roleau, captain of the guard," said he, "you have proved your faithfulness once more."

"What? I am captain, master?"

"Roleau, captain of the guard," said he, "I thank you."

And so he turned and strode from the room where one was waiting.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

Long Live the King!

In the great throne room of Gretzhoffen palace, there were gathered, late that day, those men highest in power of all the realm.

Count Frederick entered the room at last—but not alone. At his side there walked one whose presence was greeted with a frown by those grave and revered seigniors—it was a woman.

"Gentlemen," said Count Frederick, smiling as he saw this reception, "you will pardon me that I bring with me one whom I honor, whose wisdom I value. Thanks to the fate which brought this young woman to our shores, we have found the lost treasure of the king!"

A sighing silence fell upon them all. Alone of all these—till now almost unnoticed, in the corner where he sat sunken down—the weakling king made some show of resentment at what he heard. A snarl, a growl of rage almost inarticulate, came from him.

"You, Michael, our king!" said Count Frederick, suddenly turning to him, growing wrath in his tones now, "I call you 'your majesty' as yet, but I dare say to you, your majesty—your drunken majesty—your weak and helpless coward majesty—that there shall never be wasted upon you or your purpose one penny of this treasure which we have found.

"That, gentlemen," said he, turning to the councilors and ministers who stood about, "is the treasure of the people. It was saved for them. It has been guarded for them by Michael the good king, whose name this man is not fit to wear.

"Do not doubt what I say to you, gentlemen. I myself have seen that treasure with my own eyes—this lady also was with me. There is enough there to make our people very rich—more than that, to make them contented and happy—if ye use these treasures wisely. What shall we do—hand them over to yonder weakling to squander, to dissipate? No, I tell you."

They stood silent, grave, looking from one to the other and at him. He extended before him the folded parchment which he had taken from the treasure chest.

"This," said he, "we found in the treasure chest. I have brought it unopened. I have fancied it may be some document of importance to our state. It was not for me to open. Will you, your excellency?"

He offered it to the prime minister of the government. The latter gravely took it in his hands—gazed at the great seal which fastened it—broke the seal—undid the confining band and gazed upon the contents of the parchment thus unfolded. His hands shook—the great sheet almost fell from them as he read.

"Read, then," demanded Count Frederick. "What is it that you have found?" It was natural for men to obey his voice when he spoke thus.

"It is strange and wonderful—it is incredible!" said the prime minister.

Count Frederick caught in turn the parchment in his own hands. In turn his own face showed amaze, astonishment—his own strong hands shook.

"Your majesty," said he, smiling at length as he turned toward the cowering figure in the corner of the room, "I shall call you that for the last time!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Michael with one last show of resentment, summoning such resolution as he could to his then blasted face. "What do you mean—treason, in the presence of the king?"

"No treason, for you are not our king."

"These," said he, "are the imperial scripts of Michael the First of Gretzhoffen. They were buried with his treasures. In some part, they govern the disposition of those treasures. You hear in this the voice of our king, and that must be our governing power hereafter."

"What is it, then?" at length exclaimed the prime minister. "Has there been a mistake—you say Michael here is not our king—who then is our king?"

"Your excellency," said Count Frederick slowly, as he turned toward him, "yourself, these noblemen of Gretzhoffen, the council of ministers, the parliament of the realm—all these shall at length perhaps bear out my statement which I make now. I myself—I, Frederick—am the king."

At those words they made no answer. There was nothing on those calm features of insincerity, of intrigue or dishonor. His words carried with them his own conviction as to their truth.

"Listen, gentlemen," said he, gently, at last. "Great things have happened to us in our realm. We shall this day save our kingdom. As I believe, I am your king. I accept that station solemnly, and here I have the proof—it may not be doubted that ultimately its substantiation will be complete—by the parliament, by the people themselves—by all our courts—by your voice unanimous, as I doubt not, you noblemen of this kingdom.

"Shall I then read?"

"In the name of God, Amen! I, Michael of Gretzhoffen, by the grace of God, king, leave this script with the treasures of the kingdom which I have concealed herewith beneath the floor of the torture chamber. With them I place the secret governing the ownership of the treasures of this kingdom. That secret is known only to myself and my bodyguard, who has been a faithful man—Boris Roleau.

"For now these many months I have been cognizant of dangers at the hands of my own foster brother Stanislaw. Should he be successful in what I conceive to be his plans, my life may forfeit, but not the treasures themselves.

"It was my pleasure to have made a medal or a coin which should be the token of this secret. When my bodyguard, Boris Rolean, a faithful man, with myself planned the burial of these treasures, I gave him the indenture, the half of a certain coin or medal which I caused to be made and inscribed, as record of the hiding place of that which we were about to conceal. Upon the face of that medal or coin this inscription was written: 'Sub pavimenti — angule vergentis—cruciati camerae — reperietur—thesaurus—Regis Graetisjovensis.'

"So shall be preserved the secret of the hiding place of that which is the people's. Somewhere there shall exist, even though I shall die, this record. Half of it I have given into the charge of the man whom I have known to be faithful. At my death he is to take both halves and guard them well.

"Should I be slain, as well may be in these troublous and treacherous times in which I live, my wish and command is that my son be known as Michael the Second, and that he shall take from me the rule of this kingdom in his day, and the administration of these properties of the kingdom.

"It is my wish and command, my hope and my prayer, that he shall govern wisely with justice to all, firmly and with wisdom.

"There may be a long regency before my son shall reach the age of maturity. There is another, older than himself, the son of my foster brother—not of royal blood, but the bastard of a serving woman—Frederick, he is called. It may be within the purpose of my foster brother that that boy shall be brought up as the king, in case I, myself, should fail. He is not fit to rule. He is not your king. But signed hereunto is the name and the seal, unmistakable, done in my blood and his, of your king, Michael the First, and of your future king, Michael the Second, my son. He is as yet too young fully to know the gravity of these presents. But by this sign you shall know your ruler, shall these presents come to you, well beloved.

"In the name of God, amen! Michael, Rex."

"Below this signature of Michael the Good," said the measured voice of Count Frederick, "there is another signature—'Michael the Second, Rex.' Gentlemen, there are two signatures to these scripts, and there are two seals."

A sigh of wonder, almost of consternation, came from those assembled. The only protest was from the huddled object in the farther corner of the room, where still remained Michael, the drunken.

"What then, the guard!" he shrieked. "Treason to me—after him, men! This pretender—what is it that he says? What proof has he?—what proof?"

"This proof, sir!" said Count Frederick, coldly, and approached to him the broad page of the parchment sheet.

Michael gazed stupidly at what he saw, uncomprehending. Others gazed also, and at first could make nothing of what was there. Count Frederick went on:

"I recall now, as I see this page," said he, "this writing of the king, my father—you hear me, gentlemen—my father!

"I recall that I saw him place beneath the great seal, that other seal—done in his own blood. I saw him draw the blood from his own arm and put his thumb in it, and place it here, thus sealing this document with the unmistakable seal—the one alone which cannot show a mistaken identity.

"And here, gentlemen, beneath that other line of signature, which you have heard and seen, there is another, a smaller, a very small seal of a similar sort! It is the print of a human thumb—the thumb of a boy, of a baby—a baby then, a man now—who recalls that scene vaguely. And here is the proof. Gentlemen, I recall now, it was my father made this mark; but it was his great hands which took my little one and dipped my thumb in the blood which he drew from my arm, and set it here below that name which he has written, 'Michael the Second.'

"Gentlemen, who then is your king?"

Even yet they could not grasp the full significance of what they heard, and again the voice of Count Frederick resumed:

"Go, now, gentlemen, send out your agents quickly. Bring here those men of science skilled in the reading of such things as these. It was Bertillon who developed that science of infallible identification. It was he who showed that each man carries with him, in his person, from his cradle to his grave, that unmistakable seal which identifies him infallibly.

"Now bring here your men of science. Here is my hand as God made it, and as my father held it in his so many years ago. Small then—larger and stronger now! God grant it be strong enough today to do what my father did, and do it well. And may my mind have justice and liberty before it always, as those things were before his.

"Gentlemen, you know the history of this kingdom as well as I. You know the long regency following the Gretzhoffen war. You know why that regency was established. Rumor was that King Michael died like a king, in his own bed. The truth was otherwise. He was murdered here in the vault below by the men of his own foster brother.

"If that be true—and as God is my witness, I believe it to be true—then we well may guess which boy was brought up under the regent to take the place of a king. That was not myself—others, relatives of mine, reared me, as you know, until I am what you know. And yonder man—this drunken waster—not even the son of lawful wedlock, never the son of a queen—that man, he was the one accepted as your king! Treason, you say—why, there was treason to every human being who lived on Gretzhoffen soil, when that pretender took the throne!

"As for you, sir!" and he stepped over to lay an iron hand on the shoulder of the cowering man who sank back upon his seat, "your day is done. I do not say you were a party to this—I only say, you must go. For the rest, the parliament of our realm shall formally decide."

His steellike grip half lifted Michael from his place, thrust him toward, through, the door—and instantly the door closed behind him. Beyond, there was an outcast king. Within, before them all, fronting them all, stood a man, stern and resolved to accept whatever responsibility now there was.

"Gentlemen," said he, "you have my proof. I submit my case to you and the parliament. I submit myself to the law. As for that law, if it is given me to reign, always shall I support it, and always shall it be my ambition to give to the people that liberty, that justice which I myself have learned to love."

Still the silence, the tense electric silence which thus far had held them all. They stood thus for one moment. Then as with one common impulse—as though the same thought had caught them at the same instant, each of these men—idlers and wasters, or men of purpose and of principle, raised his hand. There rose in unison the old cry:

"LONG LIVE THE KING."

"I Am the King! You Shall Sit Beside Me."

CHAPTER LXXIX.

Katharine.

Two were alone once more, two whom fate had so strangely cast together in such scenes. The tumult had ceased. Quiet and order now obtained within those ancient walls. Those two were alone in the great throneroom of the kingdom, for the nobleman had signified that such was his wish.

He turned toward her now gravely and held out his hands. She placed hers in his, trembling.

"Was it true?" she whispered. "Did they indeed and indeed—did they call you—the king? Or, how can I be happy at that. Now, I must go back—I must leave you!"

"You shall never go!" said the quiet voice of the man who confronted her. "You shall never leave me now."

"But how? You are the king? It has been confirmed. The scripts were true—what we thought was true."

"I am the king! Yes, but how shall I rule alone? You shall sit beside me, for 'tis you have taught me how a king should rule. 'Liberty and justice'—those words were strangers to my ears until you spoke them. Think you I could go on in this business now, this solemn undertaking which I must assume, and miss your counsel in the future? You shall be as much queen as I am king in establishing those principles in this kingdom."

"But I cannot! I am an unknown woman. I am of no birth. I am not your—"

Again he laid his fingers upon her lips lightly.

"Cease!" said he; "do not say that word. Michael, himself, my father, perhaps was of no lofty lineage so far as traced kings could be named. He himself came from where he grew—he seized the reins of power—and he gave the people such liberty and justice as then was possible. Am I better than he? Was he better than you?—am I? Say no more, think no more that word which you were about to name."

Again he held out to her his hands, and now, in spite of all she could do, she could not withhold her own—could not withdraw them, so firmly clasped were they now. Trembling, weeping, she looked up into his eyes.

"It is all clear," said he to her at length. "It was Grahame, my unfaithful bodyguard, who had the knowledge of these things, and who betrayed us by that knowledge. He got the coins from Boris Roleau. I accord him but one item of thanks—it was through his treachery that I lost the coin at the time that I was in your country, on the errand of the Gretzhoffen loan. He stole that coin. He must have lost or pawned half of it, or sold it. At least, that is how you found it. So I thank him, for so much as that.

"As for Roleau—the son of that faithful servant of my father—he shall be honored by us both, because he has given loyalty. I myself have grieved that once I was cruel to him—that I struck him even—after the old fashion of our rulers here. Not again shall that occur. Roleau, your friend, my servant—he shall be captain of the Imperial Guard. I have told him so much as that.

"What a curse attends these treasures! See now, out of all these who have been about me, two have been faithful—the son of that man who was faithful to our earlier king, and you! You fought me, yes, but you fought fair. You kept your word—you honored your own parole—you always will do so. I trust your word as I trust the beating of my own heart. You then shall be—you are—my queen!"

She could not answer, and still he went on slowly: "Ahead of us is duty, responsibility—for both of us. We serve for liberty and justice."

He led her gently to the great throne of Gretzhoffen, which stood before them now. They bowed before it.

"I give you my faith, Katharine," said he, simply. "Do you love me?"

"I do," said she, so low he could scarce catch the words.

And even in these words spoken there, the one to the other, in the silence of the great throne chamber of the kingdom, their plighted troth seemed as the words of the priest and the roar of the great organ and the later applause of the assembled multitudes, who hailed them as saviors of the land.

He gave her a hand now up the steps to the great throne itself, and bowed to her as she dropped back upon the great seat of power.

"God do so to me and more also," said he solemnly, "if ever I betray them or you."

L'ENVOI.

Under the sea there sped from the little kingdom of Gretzhoffen to the great republic of America a message carried in the electric spark which united the world. It was directed to the editor of the Daily Star in Kitty Gray's own city, and it was enough to give even Billy Cutler, city editor, pause for at least a moment.

"Well, good Lord!" said he, "who'll I put on the society page? Boys, the flowers were a total loss—and so am I! Here is an alias and an alibi! Listen!" He read from the little yellow bit of paper which he held:

"'Great story, but cannot return to America inside six months as promised. I have lost my wager, but have gained a husband and a home. Katharine, Regina Graetisjovensis.'"

THE END